SOME POLITICAL IDEAS & PERSONS

JOHN BAILEY

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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THE CLAIMS OF FRENCH POETRY [Constable & Co.].

POETS AND POETRY [Clarendon Press].

DR. JOHNSON AND HIS CIRCLE. Home University Library [Williams & Norgate].

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A DAY BOOK OF LANDOR [Oxf. Univ. Press].

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BY JOHN BAILEY

AUTHOR OF "DR. JOHNSON AND HIS CIRCLE," ETC.

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TO

MY WIFE

PREFACE

ALL but the first of these articles appeared originally in the Literary Supplement of *The Times*, and I am indebted to the proprietors of that journal for permission to reprint them The essay on Queen Victoria, with the exception of one or two paragraphs, appears now for the first time. Except for a very few corrections and the addition of one or two notes, the reprinted articles appear as originally published. No attempt has been made to rewrite them in the light of subsequent events.

J. B.

Sept. 20, 1921.

CONTENTS

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I

QUEEN VICTORIA

It is now over twenty years since Queen Victoria died. I remember hearing it remarked by a wise man, who did not himself live beyond middle age, that the newspapers are entirely written for the young and always explain allusions to events or persons whose place in history puts them even a few years behind the birth of the actual rising generation. Well, none of the young to-day, no one under twenty-five, remembers the great Queen who seemed to their fathers and grandfathers an eternal institution. But she is the one exception to my wise man's rule. No one thinks of explaining the Queen. So great is monarchy even in a democratic age; so great, we may add, is mere continuance in a world of change. The most famous and popular of her Ministers were disliked or distrusted by one-half or one-third of the nation while they were alive; and most of them were quickly forgotten after their deaths. The Queen was too evidently honest to be distrusted; and as for dislike, she

was too permanent and inevitable, too high and remote, for anything of that kind. You do not dislike the sun even when he refuses to shine. The Queen was always there even when hidden by the distant mists of Balmoral. Others came and went on the great stage. She was always on it, on its throne, the central figure. None of the four statesmen who occupied it longest in her reign, neither Palmerston, nor Russell, nor Disraeli, nor even Gladstone, was quite in its centre by her side for so much as thirty years. She was there for sixty-three years, like a divine and immovable statue on a pedestal: like and yet so unlike; for the goddess was always very human and could visibly frown and smile. When her figure was at last removed the stage was clear for a new play. With her death another age and another world began.

The reaction was naturally a sharp one, something like that which occurred in France after the end of the still longer reign of Louis XIV. The Court became lively and amused itself and others; the political world became disturbed and even, after a little while, what the Queen would certainly have called revolutionary; art went in for strange experiments; good women behaved like criminal lunatics; good men, who themselves lived the most orderly and commonplace lives, declared that religion consisted in "living dangerously"; in fact, all those follies occurred which invariably occur when good sense and good conduct have been too long and too insolently self-complacent. And then came

the war: and no one can deny that since 1914 we have, whether in war or peace, lived dangerously enough to satisfy the most exacting taste. The result is that it already seems a long time since the Queen died, and the reaction against her outlook and the outlook and even the achievements of her age is probably now at its height. Confident and not entirely uneducated young persons may be heard discussing the Victorian era as mediocre, dull, and unimportant. Of course any one who knows enough of history, and in particular of English history, to compare one period with another, knows that that is simply absurd. The age of Victoria was the age of a Queen who practised social life as little as she could during most of her eighty-two years (during all, perhaps, except the first three or four of her reign), and of a middle class which never learnt to practise it at all; so it was socially rather dull. But in no other respect was it even dull, still less mediocre or unimportant. On the contrary, if the hundred years that passed between 1790 and 1890 were not only by far the most successful in our history, but also probably the greatest, the fifty of them that belonged to Victoria are at least as great as those that belonged to her grandfather and uncles. Only in poetry and war has the earlier half-century a decided advantage, and that is balanced by the still more decided advantage which the Victorian period has in science.

When the present very natural reaction has passed away, as it most assuredly will, it will be

seen that the reign of Queen Victoria was not only more prosperous than any recorded period of equal length in the history of any country, but was also an age of great men in nearly every field. And it was an age which knew how to honour their greatness. Where are the statesmen to-day whom men respect as their grandfathers respected Peel, whom men worship as their fathers worshipped Gladstone, to whose genius they look up in dazzled wonder, pride, and delight as men once looked up to the mysterious figure of Disraeli? And the same contrast may be seen in other fields. Where to-day is the writer who is heard and reverenced as a seer, not by the readers of popular newspapers, but by the leaders of the thought, the science, the art, the public life of the nation—as Tennyson and George Eliot, Carlyle and Ruskin, were heard and reverenced fifty years ago? Where are the religious leaders who to-day stir hearts and minds as Newman did in one way during the reign of Victoria, and Maurice and Kingsley in another, Pusey and Liddon in yet another, to say nothing of men like Spurgeon and obscurer teachers of obscurer followers? We may now see the limitations of these men as clearly as their greatness. But the man who sees greatness is himself a greater man than the man who merely sees limitations. And the followers of such men as these were by no means all fools. Still less were they fools who resorted to Carlyle and Tennyson and George Eliot as oracles of wisdom. On the contrary, they were among the acutest

intellects and noblest characters of their day. Where to-day are the successors either of the oracles or of the pilgrims? Evidently there is loss somewhere. Either we no longer have the great men or we no longer have the will or power to honour greatness. It must be one or the other. And whichever it is, it is clear that the Georgian era will be wise to give itself as yet no airs when talking of the Victorian.

But all this is a digression. My present business is with Victoria herself, and no one will pretend that she had much directly to do with the literary, scientific, or religious movements of the age to which she gives her name. Still she does give it; and people who talk about her generally express opinions about her time. So I thought an unrepentant and unashamed Victorian ought not to be afraid of uttering his. I am no pessimist; on the contrary, I have sometimes been accused of being a blind optimist. I am not at all prepared to accept as certainties, far less as gospel, all the gloomy prophecies of such men as my friends Dean Inge and Mr. Bateson.* I comfort myself with a recollection that they were neither of them very hopeful about winning the war; and I am far from having given up faith in the capacity of the English people to surprise the pessimists once more by winning the peace in the same slow stubborn way in which they won the war.

* See "Common Sense in Racial Problems," by W. Bateson, M.A., F.R.S.; a lecture delivered to the Eugenics Education Society.

Our universal-suffrage democracy certainly has its grave dangers; and if it will not steady its emotions and listen to the warning voices of the historians and the political economists and, perhaps most important of all, the biologists, the merits which it has will not save it, and the ship of democracy, which is not at all necessarily the same thing as the ship of England, will run upon the rocks and break up. But democracy in this country is young yet, and that tough and ancient thing English common sense is working upon it, and may very well prune it of its follies as it pruned monarchy and aristocracy. Its youth, too, will suffice, at least for the present, as an excuse for its mediocrity.. The seers and the geniuses have generally appeared after, not during, the times of novelty, war, and confusion. And when we have settled down, our young democracy, our Georgian or post-Georgian age, may produce its sages and seers and master poets as well as another. Only so long as it has not done so it had better not throw stones at its predecessor which did.

Queen Victoria would certainly have been amazed at its daring to do so. She was accustomed to keep her grandchildren, even the conceited William, in very strict awe of her. She had contemplated all the great doings of her age, and on the whole had blessed them all and extended her protecting and consecrating ægis over them. She was quite conscious that they were a part of her glory, not one atom of which would she for one moment surrender. But she

had nothing whatever directly to do with most of them. She was no philosopher or friend of philosophers like her ancestresses Sophia and Caroline; no theologian like James I. or Henry VIII.; no fine judge of art like Charles I.; no ready dabbler in science, letters, and wit, like Charles II. She was only two things, a woman and a Queen; but in those two she was remarkable enough.

There is no class of men who are so seldom fairly judged as sovereigns. During his lifetime a king's intellect and character are usually much over-praised by people who do not believe what they say. After his death they are apt to be equally underrated by people who do. The reason of the second fact, though commonly unperceived, is really not much less obvious than that of the first. Those who, after a king's death or even during his life, are under no moral temptation to flatter him are almost always under an intellectual temptation to belittle him. They are apt to become the victims of a fallacy. They confuse a king with a statesman, a general, a writer of a book. Each of these is visited with just contempt if he fails in a function which he need never have accepted. He has cast himself for the chief part, proves fit only for that of walking gentleman, and cannot complain if he is found ridiculous. But the position of a hereditary king is quite different to this. He is, by the laws of nature, commonly an average man; but by the laws of his country he is called upon to do what cannot be perfectly done by an

average man. There are very good reasons for this apparent anomaly. Monarchy is on the whole such a useful institution, and it is on the whole so important that there should be no doubt as to who the monarch is or is to be that it is found worth while to disregard the fact that some monarchs will be knaves or fools, and only a few will prove ideal occupants of the throne. But the result is a confusion of thought which is very hard on monarchs. The king is judged not by the average standard which may fairly be demanded of him, but by the ideal of an office which he could not escape. George III. is scorned for not having understood the Catholic question so well as Pitt, and Victoria for having been slower than Russell or Palmerston to catch the idea of Italian unity. The truth is, of course, that she could not fairly be expected to be anything else. She is all through her life an ordinary woman placed in a very exceptional position; and the interest of studying her lies largely in watching the play and counterplay of the two—the ordinary acting on the exceptional and the exceptional on the ordinary, the Queen dominating the woman, and then again the woman appearing through the Queen.

What do we think of her now as we begin to get far enough away to see her as she actually was? The protecting aureole of royalty is now fast fading, and making it possible for us to see the woman apart from the Queen. Or at least making it possible to try, and perhaps partly to succeed. To separate them altogether is im-

possible in the case of a woman who can scarcely ever, even for a moment, have thought of herself quite apart from her great office, from the day that she first knew she was to hold it. Monarchy is like the priesthood: he who has been once invested with it never puts it off. A lawyer or a soldier can think of himself as a mere man; not so a priest and not so a king. For good or for evil neither of them is ever a mere man again. And so with Queen Victoria. We have had a great deal published about her; much of it written by her own hand—her own letters and journals. Some of these she herself gave to the public in her lifetime; others have been published since her death. They are the capital documents, of course; not only because, by universal admission, she was the most rigidly truthful of human beings, but also because letters and journals almost invariably betray their writer's character even when he most means them to conceal it. Often indeed what they betray is a virtue or a vice, or many of either, of which the writer is himself quite unconscious. Neither Chesterfield in his way nor Fitzgerald in his would have guessed at all the impression the publication of their letters would make on posterity. And even Pope who posed for posterity, who forged and falsified to make his letters carry him down to future generations as a pattern of tenderness, unworldliness, and universal benevolence, even Pope the consummate artist, the untiring labourer, has wasted his skill and pains. He has been found out. About Queen

Victoria there is nothing to find out, nothing at any rate to unmask. Everywhere the picture she gives of herself is one of transparent truth, or at least of transparent sincerity. She describes herself, her actions, her motives, her feelings, simply and sincerely, as what she honestly believed them to be. And what she wished to be and thought she was is with her even more than with everybody else a guide and index to what she was in reality. Whatever is to be written about her, her own writings must in future always be the bedrock on which it is built. Many people, of course, have already discussed and described her: some of them, like the diarists Creevey and Greville, and Sarah Lady Lyttelton, wrote long before her letters were published; others like Sir Sidney Lee, Lord Esher, and now Mr. Lytton Strachey, with the full advantage of them: and those who are looking for the woman apart from the Queen must go rather to what has been written about her than to her published letters. The journals, it is true, give the girl and the woman. But the letters given to the public are almost entirely the composition of the Queen. What we get in them is her political rather than her private character. There are no letters to her mother, none to her children, and hardly any to anybody that are not almost entirely taken up with public affairs. The three volumes are rather a mass of material for the future historian of the reign than a help to the personal biographer of the child, girl, woman, daughter, wife, mother, friend who

had her private likes and dislikes, joys and sorrows, good points and bad, like other human beings.

The best book written about her is certainly the last, Mr. Strachey's. To one reader at any rate it was rather a surprise to find it so. I know three books of Mr. Strachey's. The first was a short book on French poetry, of which it is scarcely going too far to say that it is, in the modest way of such books, a little masterpiece. But of course a book of that sort appealed only to a limited public. Then some years later came the clever, ill-natured, very limited, strangely overpraised, volume called "Eminent Victorians." It was amusing, of course; about as amusing as Voltaire on Joan of Arc, or Mr. Bernard Shaw on Shakespeare; full of that blind and ugly cleverness which never knows when it is handling something too great for it, and is always cutting capers when it had better be on its knees. And then this volume was announced, and one could not but have one's fears. But things have turned out better than might have been expected. Queen Victoria has won the last and not the least of her victories. No one who found himself in that august presence ever had the courage to take a liberty with her in her lifetime. And even her shade has had its effect on Mr. Strachey. He who almost certainly came to scoff has on the whole remained to pray. His book is this time not merely brilliant and amusing; it is also understanding, sympathetic, and just. Of course

he treats Victoria with perfect freedom, humour, and detachment: the time for that had plainly come; the time, and the man. And of course he delights himself and us by the cool wit and quiet ironies with which he handles the Queen's limitations and domesticities. But it is not his laugh that has the final word. Both the woman and the Queen silence the satirist in the end. No one has paid more striking tribute to Victoria's essential goodness than this professional scoffer. Indeed, of course it is largely because he is himself that his tribute is so striking. He says at the beginning that her childish words "I will be good" were "more than a conventional protestation"; they were "an instinctive summary of the dominating qualities of a life." And what he says at the end is only the same thing in other words. He is speaking of the feeling her people had about her. There was her vitality. "She had reigned for sixty years and she was not out." But that was far from all they felt about her. "She was a character." "Goodness they prized above every other human quality; and Victoria, who, at the age of twelve, had said she would be good, had kept her word. Duty, conscience, morality—yes! in the light of those high beacons the Queen had always lived. She had passed her days in work and not in pleasure—in public responsibilities and family cares." And, as he adds, a character is never a mere bundle of qualities; there is always some one element which is the fundamental thing common to them all and holding them all together. As to what

that was in Victoria he says there can be no doubt: it was "a peculiar sincerity." All sorts of one-sidedness and lack of the sense of proportion are the natural material of humour, and of course Mr. Strachey does not throw away the opportunities given him by the very virtues of the Queen; in fact, they provide some of his most entertaining pages. But the present point is that as in her life so after her death her virtues get the last word. She was a good woman from the beginning to the end of her story; and nobody, not even people who find the amusing rarer and pleasanter than the good, escapes the impression of her goodness. Only a fool could be blind to it; only a Mephistopheles could remain altogether untouched by it. And a biographer who failed to insist upon it would be like a portrait painter who left out the one feature in his sitter's face by which, before all others, it would always be remembered by all who knew him.

Perhaps there is only one suggestion in Mr. Strachey's portrait which invites criticism. He has a notion that, in the genial society of Melbourne, the prim pupil of the Baroness Lehzen was catching a kind of throwback to the eighteenth century. He admits that Melbourne's instructions went all the other way. But still Melbourne was a survivor of that old world and showed its qualities at their very best. And she was just emancipated from the confinement of a schoolroom and suddenly introduced to the splendour of palaces, to almost unbounded

wealth, to universal deference, to the enjoyment of all that youth and health offer so lavishly and so dangerously when, as in her case, they are not reined in by either of their usual bridles and go as they please with no parents to forbid them and no poverty to deny. But all this seems purely fanciful. Sincerity is unity in utterance. And the sincerity of Victoria's speech is not more conspicuous than the unity of her life. The girl of nineteen who met her Council on the morning of her accession with that perfect coolness and dignity; who immediately, on that day, had her bed moved out of her mother's room; who instantly, that very morning, the moment the great men left her, told her mother that she would never again sit down to a meal with Sir John Conroy, and in consequence had all her meals that day alone (for I believe Mr. Strachey is mistaken in saying that Stockmar breakfasted with her; he only came in while she was at breakfast); such a girl as this clearly had innate in her one of the strongest of characters and one of the most indomitable of wills. From the first she evidently liked work, liked taking it seriously and being taken seriously herself. She had been carefully and strictly brought up, and a strict bringing up seems to be a gamble: it either makes a child serious for life, or it makes him all his life a hater of seriousness in all its forms. With the Queen it plainly had the first result. As at the end of her life she thought all the world, that is the world of Mayfair and the country houses, "a little mad," so at the

beginning she had an innate contempt and dislike of idle people, especially if they were also disreputable. She was quite conscious of herself as the embodiment of a reaction against the undignified and immoral courts of her uncles. To *their* eighteenth century, which was far from the whole of that interesting period, to the eighteenth century of the young Charles Fox and the old Dukes of Queensberry and Norfolk, of the Brighton Pavilion, Carlton House, and other flamboyancies, I do not believe that she was ever for one moment in danger of " looking back " or " wavering." She and all that were always from first to last as opposite to each other as the two Poles. Her danger was in fact just the contrary of that to which her uncles and the men and women of their world succumbed. People thought her, as Melbourne plainly told her, " lofty, high, stern, and decided," but " that's much better than that you should be thought familiar." Nobody ever did find her that. She was all will and character from the first, with a turn for being obstinate and severe. Her uncles, on the other hand, had all the weakness of epicureans, and their lives were a succession of undignified, disorderly, and half involuntary concessions to the momentary demands of their senses.

No: that was not the possible development which was prevented by the arrival of her husband and the substitution of Peel for Melbourne. It is dangerous work guessing at the might-have-beens of personality. But if one

does dare to make such guesses mine would be of a different sort. No moral change was within the limits of probability. But perhaps an intellectual change was. Is it not possible that if things could have continued as they were between 1837 and 1840 her whole mind and outlook might have widened, opened, and expanded? The tendency of late has been, I think, to underrate her natural abilities. She never had much education; all she was taught was some religion, a very little history, and the usual linguistic and æsthetic accomplishments. Her mother spoke of her as a child as possessing "strength of intellect," and though mothers in general are not the best judges in such cases, the Duchess may well have been not far wrong. But a child who till the day of her Accession never went downstairs without some one holding her hand, was not given much chance of developing any kind of strength except the sense of duty. Then came the Accession and those significant, almost formidable, "alones," underlined or written in capital letters—which punctuate the journal of the day. And then came Melbourne, and after a week or two he and the faithful Lehzen divided her life. But Lehzen's lessons were schoolroom lessons. The day for them was over. Melbourne was statesman, scholar, and man of the world, a kind of Nestor turned courtier who never forgot either that she was an inexperienced girl, or that she was a Queen and he her subject and servant. And he was friend and almost father as well as tutor: how delightful

this new way of going to school must have been! How delightful, in fact, we know it was. But that is an old story. The present point is not its delightfulness but the question whether all we know of it does not prove the Queen to have had a quicker and finer intellect than has commonly been supposed. Would an ordinary girl have hurried to write down all the interesting things Melbourne said to her about politics, history, literature, religion? Could an ordinary girl have done it if she tried? Ask such a girl who has just been dining with a party of distinguished men, where there has been striking talk, to write down what was said, and what sort of success does she make of it? Victoria, on the other hand, occasionally does her Melbourne almost as well as Boswell did his Johnson; and only fools fancy that Boswell's was an easy task or could have been accomplished by a fool. If we know nothing else of Melbourne, this young girl's diary would be enough to make us realise how well informed, how wise, how humorous, how unexpected his conversation was. She gives us a most vivid impression of his manner; not only of what sort of things he said, but of the way he had of saying them. How many grown women or, for the matter of that, grown men can do that for anybody? Melbourne could not have talked as he did to a slow or stupid girl; no one can talk well except to an intelligent listener. He thought her that, and more than that; and I submit that we who have seen her diary know better than he did

how right he was. For the truth is that only a rather unusual girl would have listened to or remembered such talk, or could have reproduced it with such vivacity, point, and evident truth. One illustration of what I mean will suffice.

"I asked Lord Melbourne if he didn't think Johnson's poetry very hard; he said he did, and that Garrick said, 'Hang it, it's as hard as Greek.' His prose he admires, though he said pedantry was to be observed throughout it; and Lord Melbourne thinks what he *said* superior to what he *wrote*. In spite of all that pedantry, Lord Melbourne said, 'a deep feeling and a great knowledge of human nature' pervaded all he said and wrote." Here is an admirable, almost complete, criticism of Johnson in two or three sentences. But how many girls of nineteen would have cared to listen to it, or, if they had, would have wished to write it down, or, again if they had, would have been able to do the writing down as Victoria has done it?

So, perhaps, if those easy, happy years, with that very human old tutor, could have gone on, she might have opened out in a good many directions and discovered more interesting things in the world than she was in fact ever to discover. But Melbourne left her, and Albert came. And though Albert was only too intellectual, his was not an inviting or expanding or amusing kind of intellect; and he liked domination and rigidity, not the free play of the mind which was Melbourne's most delightful

characteristic; and he was husband and soon complete master, and the little mind, which might so easily have grown larger, just enclosed itself in his in a way that it never could have enclosed itself in the airy spaces of Melbourne's which had no prison walls of any kind about it, for itself or others. And then nine children came one after another; and though children are far better things than any intellectual adventures, they have to be paid for like other delights, and their price is commonly a domesticity of mind as well as of life. And so the scarcely begun chapter of expansion closed, and the years 1841–1861 were years of narrow concentration and blind, humble, loving acceptance; and after Albert's death the acceptance became a kind of religion, blinder than ever, and till Disraeli came Victoria lived in the past, and nothing interesting, joyous, or amusing, nothing that was in any way expansive, was allowed to profane its memories or interfere with the duty of consistency, continuance, and consecration. And when Disraeli came, an Oriental Lord Melbourne, even more amusing and quite as expansive, it was too late. The young girl had become a venerable and unchangeable institution, and the jewelled epigrams and audacities of a favourite servant, however daring and brilliant, could no longer do for her what might perhaps once have been done by the *lene tormentum* of the mind of her first Prime Minister, at once so curious and inquisitive, so easy, tolerant, wise, and humane, and by his companionship, with

its beautifully blended mixture of deference and authority.

And so the Queen remained rather a narrow woman all her life. A concentrated mind often makes the will all the stronger. And the cutting short of Lord Melbourne's lessons leaves its mark perhaps in the rather childish vehemence of the letters to her ministers with all their excitability and passionate underlining. As we grow older most of us abound more and more in our own sense. It is the very business of a sane and wide culture to prevent our doing that too much, and to keep the mental windows open. The Queen's windows were early shut, and never reopened. And so authority grew more and more accustomed to itself, closed upon itself, and stiffened; so that, good mother as she was, all her children regarded her with almost as much awe as affection; and the mutual affection, real as it was, was not incompatible with a certain distance of relation. I have heard, for instance, that her daughters had never seen their mother in bed, or even entered her bedroom, till she lay dying and almost past consciousness. There may be parallels to this habit of privacy in other women of her generation. The practice of turning bedrooms into boudoirs open to both sexes, which one may hope is not common to-day, was not even invented then. But in Victoria's seclusion there was probably not only her generation, nor even only her solitary position as Queen, but a certain stiffness and narrowness of nature and disposition. And this

narrowness, satisfied within its own limitations, showed itself in the ugliness of the homes she made for herself and the dullness of the life she was content to live in them. Exactly dull herself she never was, I imagine; neither her natural ability, nor her great position, nor all she had seen and known and lived through allowed of that. But if she could not make herself dull she almost seemed to choose dullness for her world, especially the worst dullness of all—that of monotony and routine.

But there is another side to the picture. Women have commonly been greater in heart than in head, and if Victoria's intelligence was a little starved her emotional capacities were full grown and beyond the ordinary stature. Tenderness and bravery often go together, and it is sometimes said that she was rarely excelled in either. Perhaps her courage has been exaggerated. All the men of her house have been conspicuous for it, from little George II. at Dettingen to her own son at Calais quite undisturbed by the would-be assassin. And she herself showed coolness, it appears, on the several occasions early in her life when miscreants tried to kill her. It is no blame to a woman if she could not keep that courage up. Only, as a matter of fact, I doubt if she did. I remember an old Home Secretary telling me of his pressing her to make a public appearance, and of her replying, "You would not press me if you knew how frightened I am all the time of being shot at." And I myself was once witness of her

visible agitation in a London street when she was driving with the Empress Frederick and the carriage was unavoidably stopped for a few minutes by the upset of an omnibus or wagon. One felt that she was asking herself, not at all unnaturally, whether the block had been an arranged thing. In bigger matters, public matters, she was as brave as a lion; and if a foreign enemy had ever got to England the last person to admit the thought of surrender would have been the Queen. Still her personal courage in her later years, at any rate, may have been exaggerated. On the other hand, her kindness and sympathy no one can exaggerate. If the Queen, and the ever-present consciousness of what she was, sometimes warped the woman a little, as in her relations with her children, the woman may be seen, in a happier way, acting on the Queen in her relations with her people. All their joys and sorrows were hers, as they had never been to any sovereign before her. Everybody felt that the sympathy which she expressed in times of public calamity was perfectly sincere. And she looked for and gained the same from her people in her own private sorrows. This was a new thing of her own creation. When Prince Henry died in 1612 poets and statesmen sincerely grieved over the death of a Prince of the highest promise. But I suppose very few of the people knew much about it; and neither the court nor the nation cared much about the feelings of James I. Queen Victoria made a family relation between herself and the nation. She was the

mother of her people; she gave them her heart, especially in their sorrows, and she expected and obtained theirs in return. That was a thing without a precedent in our history; it was a personal achievement of Victoria's, of the woman guiding and inspiring the Queen. And, though no woman of letters, she was extraordinarily felicitous in the letters which she addressed to her people on these occasions. That on the death of the Duke of Clarence struck many people at the time as in its way a masterpiece; for what can a masterpiece do more than perform its particular task to perfection?

So the Queen, to whom it is now full time to turn, was helped by the woman. For a Sovereign who had no hold on the affections of the people, would in this country under modern conditions be of little importance. The Duke of Cumberland from whom Victoria saved us would have been a risky experiment in 1837; to-day he would probably be impossible. The Crown is no longer regarded as a personal property whose owner is just a legal fact irrespective of his character. It is an inheritance the splendour of whose jewels each succeeding wearer has to justify afresh. The essence of democracy is that everything in it goes by consent. It is yet to be proved whether that sort of sanction will in the long run prove a satisfactory substitute for the older ones of established custom and legal right. But so it at present is. With our unwritten Constitution there is almost nothing that a strong wave of popular desire might not

accomplish. No doubt if such a wave led to a visible disaster, as it easily might, it would probably produce a return upon itself and a demand for safeguards of some sort, written or unwritten, personal or impersonal. And one of them might easily be some revival of the Royal authority, the only authority whose prestige is at once immense and universal throughout all parts of the Empire. Meanwhile, whatever be the future destiny of the Crown, whether it be lost in a Republic, or restored to some greater measure of personal power, or maintained as it is, the ultimate writer of its history will certainly declare that no one had more to do with the shaping of that future than Queen Victoria. We cannot yet be sure what her shaping will result in. But we can be sure that the historian will ultimately perceive, when the event is accomplished, that the processes which were decisive in producing it are to be looked for chiefly in the reign and partly in the personal character and actions of Victoria.

What was she as Queen? What did she do? How did she exercise her functions as Sovereign, and how did her exercise of them affect the position of the Monarchy? These are large questions, much too large to receive a full answer in a few pages of a short essay. But there are one or two points which may be touched on.

Victoria inherited the difficult task of playing the chief titular part in working that vague thing known as the British Constitution which few

pretend to understand and no one pretends to define. It is like so many English institutions, the child of custom and precedent and compromise, in which all the actors play parts which have never been written out for them and fill up the piece by impromptus as they go along. Most of such institutions work in practice very well with the invaluable help of the English character. Even the constitution has on the whole worked very well. But it has a disadvantage which other similar institutions have not, a disadvantage which peculiarly affects the Crown. It is confronted with laws which are in flagrant contradiction with it. The contradiction was already great enough when the makers of the American Constitution, very naturally supposing the written law to be the best guide to the facts, gave their President astonishing powers which he still has, though George III. had in practice lost them before Washington received them. It became greater still after the Reform Bill of 1832; and it is greater now than it was then. The law gives the King to-day, and still more of course gave him in 1837, a very large number of powers which it is tacitly assumed that he will not dream of exercising. In theory he could even declare war by his own decision.

Queen Victoria, a girl of nineteen, inherited this uncertain and difficult position. Lord Melbourne carefully taught her the customary constitutional limitations of her powers, and on the whole she learnt them very well. But he

could not tell her precisely what they were, because neither he nor any one else knew. Indeed they were changing, and have continued to change, every few years from that day to this. And a young woman of strong will who had had the Coronation Service said over her, who had often heard the prayers of the Prayer Book about her, who was surrounded by a deferential Court and was in constant correspondence with foreign sovereigns who governed as well as reigned, was sure to think a little more of the past and the letter of the law than was wise, and a little less of the present and the spirit of the constitution. And so no doubt Victoria did. She always not only spoke but thought of " my " Army, " my " Navy, " my " Ministers, even of " my " engagements and treaties. There is a great deal of " my " in her journals and letters. And in law she was perfectly right. " In theory the Crown does every act of executive government," says Sir William Anson, in his book on the Constitution. So, also, almost everything in England that belongs to the State belongs in law to the King. The very laws themselves are the King's laws " enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty by and with the advice and consent of " certain other persons. The very peace which they are designed to protect is the King's peace, and till an unimaginative Act of Parliament, indifferent to poetry and history, was passed in 1915, those who broke it were said to offend " against the peace of our Sovereign Lord and King, his Crown and dignity." But law and

life, law and practice, are in fact very different things, and the King as understood by the Constitution is a very different person from the King as defined in the laws.

All this made a very difficult position for Victoria. Herself of an unimaginative, precise, rather legal habit of mind and of a naturally authoritative temper, she inevitably clung to as much as she could of her legal position and continually resented the ever new encroachment upon it. Her letters, from the earliest to the latest of which we know anything, are full of these clingings and resistances, and they make a curious study in the working of such a system as ours. To be a constitutional Sovereign is in fact to be the most difficult thing in the world. The Sovereignty and the constitutionalism are so very awkward to reconcile, and the differences between them so apt to crop up at every turn. They may be said, in one sense, to fill the Queen's letters. She was from the first, and probably to the last, very tenacious of her rights as Sovereign. She never tried to use them for any personal or selfish objects, but she believed that she held them as trustee for the permanent interests of the nation, and was determined never to see them infringed without protest. In her view, which is the view of the law, Ministers were her servants. They must therefore take no important step without her previous consent; appointments must not be made, or even talked of, till she had approved the names; party ties must not be considered against the claims of her service;

above all, the Army and Navy were her Army and Navy, and must not become the Army and Navy of the House of Commons. Hence the perpetual rappings over the knuckles administered, all through the letters, to statesman after statesman, especially, of course, to Lord Palmerston, between 1846 and his dismissal in 1851; but also, with almost equal vigour, to Lord John Russell on account of his action in the Italian question, and to smaller men about smaller matters, as, for instance, to Mr. Labouchere about a Colonial Governorship, to Lord Panmure about a movement of troops, to Lord Stanley about the introduction of competitive examinations, and to the Duke of Newcastle for omitting her name in a despatch to Lord Raglan. Of course she was entirely within her right in all these cases; no lawyer could have hesitated for a moment between her view of her position and that on which her Ministers often acted, though only a special favourite like Aberdeen could state it frankly to her. Not that she would ever have denied in terms her constitutional and Parliamentary position. On the contrary, she fully admitted it; and the difficulty of her situation simply consisted in the fact that she at once meant to reign and meant to be constitutional, and that the problem how perfectly to carry out these two intentions is one that remains for the future to solve. She had nearly always a policy of her own; it was frequently a wiser policy than that suggested by any one else, and it very often convinced her Ministers; and, that being so, it

seemed obvious to her that they ought to proceed to carry it out. It took her a long time to realise what even to-day many writers on politics fail to realise, that, in our Parliamentary system, what Ministers can do is not what they wish or even what they think right, but simply as much of either as they think Parliament can be persuaded to accept. This or that, she was apt to argue, was the legal right of the Crown, the legal function of the Executive; Ministers must act upon it as the Queen's servants and in the interests of the country; and, as to the approval of the House of Commons, that must be got somehow, or done without, as it legally might be. No doubt factious members of Parliament do appear very contemptible when seen as the Queen saw them, from the high point of view of the Throne, or from the wide point of view of Europe —much, indeed, as they appear to history and truth. But they can never appear negligible to Ministers whose existence and power of usefulness depend on their votes. The Queen once wrote to Lord Derby: "There is in fact no difference of opinion between the Queen and Lord Derby; the latter only keeps in view the effect which certain words will have in Parliament and upon the country, whilst she looks to the effect they will produce upon the European conflict." That was her strength, and one of the greatest of the services she rendered to English politics throughout her reign. She supplied the Cabinet with a pair of European eyes, which saw something more than public meetings and

Parliamentary divisions. But it was also her weakness. The natural prejudices of a Sovereign, one of that family of crowned heads which always feels itself a class apart and has a tenderness even for its least worthy members, combined with the legalism of her disposition to make the Queen look sometimes at European changes almost from the point of view of a kind of Royal family solicitor. The notion of the rights of certain august personages, and of the government of certain tracts of land as their heritable property, lingered in her mind rather longer, perhaps, than befitted the devoted niece of the King of the Belgians, who owed his Throne to a popular uprising, or, as Lord John Russell had ultimately to remind her, to the heiress of the Glorious Revolution of 1688. It was this that made her shrink in early days from any idea of touching the small German States, and kept her in almost constant opposition to the efforts made by Palmerston and Russell to drive Austria out of Lombardy and get rid of the effete little duchies that stood in the way of United Italy.

She was wrong about Italy and wrong about some other important questions. But it is worth noticing how often it was she, or perhaps in reality the Prince Consort, in any case the Crown as opposed to the Ministers, who read the European situation aright. She, for instance, was right and Palmerston wrong about the danger of revolution in the France of Louis Philippe; she was right again in seeing that the latitude allowed to Stratford de Redcliffe at Constantinople must

lead to war; she was right both in the caution and prudence which might have prevented that war and in the decision with which she rebuked Lord Aberdeen for keeping the gloves on after the fighting was begun. It was she, again, who laid down in an admirable letter to Palmerston in 1857 the two essential points for the new Government of India, a single Secretary of State to speak in the Queen's name and a single Commander-in-Chief to command the whole army. Above all it was she who, at the crisis of her life, rendered to her country a service, the greatness of which we could not fully realise before 1917, by so altering Lord Russell's despatch on the Trent affair as to leave the United States a loophole for honourable retreat. This last action was admittedly more that of the dying Prince than of the Queen; and no doubt most of her views between 1841 and 1861 were learnt from him. But it is scarcely possible to separate the two personalities who had long before the end been fused into one by a life in which they were never separated and after the first year or two scarcely ever disagreed. It was no doubt the Prince who guided and the Queen who followed; but whatever they did was done in the name of the Queen and was, for good or for evil, credit or discredit, the act of the Crown.

That their devotion to the interests of England, as they saw them, was unbounded, and that they often rendered the highest services to the country, is certain. What effect their activities had on the position of the Crown is more doubtful.

Mr. Strachey thinks that from 1840 to 1861 the power of the Crown steadily increased, and he thinks that if the Prince Consort had lived he must have acquired an authority which no minister could resist so that Disraeli's prophecy might perhaps have come true: "If the Prince had outlived some of our old stagers he would have given us the blessings of absolute government."

Disraeli, who had to live in a very real world, liked playing at escaping from it into another, the creation of his mind, in which the conceivable was the possible and the possible often became the probable. I doubt if he, with his knowledge of English politics, ever seriously thought that "the blessings of absolute government" were attainable in this country unless and until the prestige of Parliament broke down a great deal more than he ever lived to see. In the sixties, when, according to the prophecy and to Mr. Strachey, this development might have taken place, that prestige was absolutely at its height. Only a man unacquainted with politics like Mr. Strachey or wilfully escaping from his acquaintance like Disraeli could imagine any such achievement as possible.

Is it even certain that the Queen and Prince really increased the power of the Crown inherited by her in 1837? Of course they immensely increased its prestige and popularity with the people at large. But its official and political power? Had they more or less power to affect the decisions of their Ministers than

George IV. or William IV.? Plainly less I think. The Queen could never have dismissed her Ministers of her own will as William IV. did in 1834; nor could a great question of policy like Catholic Emancipation have hung uncertain on her attitude as it did on that of George IV. It was the irony, almost the tragedy, of her life that, though she in a sense knew this and always recognised it in the long run, she would not keep it present to her everyday mind. As Mr. Strachey well says, "Her desire to impose her will, vehement as it was and unlimited by any principle, was yet checked by a certain shrewdness. She might oppose her Ministers with extraordinary violence; she might remain utterly impervious to arguments and supplications; the pertinacity of her resolution might seem to be unconquerable; but her innate respect and capacity for business, and perhaps, too, the memory of Albert's scrupulous avoidance of extreme courses, prevented her from ever entering an *impasse*." She was furious against Mr. Gladstone about Egypt and about Home Rule, and even against her beloved Disraeli for allowing Derby and Carnarvon to sickly o'er his resolution in facing Russia with their own pale cast of thought. But an actual breach with either she had too much good sense, and too much sense of duty, to face. In the long run she knew that it was the Cabinet who must decide large issues of policy. But there lay the tragedy. It was only in the long run that she knew it. Hence she constantly

overdid the proper part which still remains to the Sovereign in matters of policy. Sir William Anson says: "Kings still remain the instrument without which Ministers cannot act; they still remain advisers who have enjoyed unusual opportunities for acquiring the knowledge which makes advice valuable, who may be possessed of more than ordinary experience, where warnings must be listened to with more than ordinary courtesy." All this she had; and in the last half of her reign, her age, her lifelong connection with great affairs, the fact that she was a woman, her unique position as the general grandmother of the Emperors and Kings of Europe, gave her the chance of realising it to a degree which no other constitutional Sovereign is likely to equal. But she largely missed her chance because of her vehemence and passion and because she would overstep this *rôle*. She would write and speak, often till nearly the last moment, as if the final decision rested with her; as if she were not, what Anson makes her, the most honoured and august of *amici curiæ*, but what the letter of the law makes her, the actual Court itself. Hence the life and labours recorded in her letters seem partly wasted.

Sometimes after reading accounts of her laborious hours the feeling which rises in one's mind recalls ancient words: she had toiled all day and taken nothing. Even her legitimate and necessary functions gave her days of work which few women, or men either, could have borne as she bore them. Here is a single day

of her life as we see it in her published letters: February 2, 1855. It begins with an elaborate memorandum by the Prince on the interviews of the previous day consequent on the resignation of the Aberdeen Ministry. Then visit of Lord Lansdowne, followed by long memorandum by the Queen. Letter of the Queen to Lord John Russell. Visit of Lord John, followed by memorandum by the Queen and Prince. Lord Lansdowne again. Letter to Lord John by the Queen commanding him to form a Ministry. Reply of Lord John accepting. Surely not many days in any life can show a more crowded succession of responsible labours. And this was her inevitable and unavoidable, though of course only occasional, duty. What she added to it, what she conceived herself also to be bound to do, made a strain that was scarcely ever relaxed. She told the Prince before their marriage that she could find time for only two or three days' honeymoon, and when he lay dying she had to attend to public business the day before his death and resume it a fortnight later. No one can read her life without being moved and a little inspired by her industry and sense of duty. "I will be good." She was not a woman of genius, but she was supremely a woman of character. Indeed, if genius were what the absurd definition called it "an infinite capacity for taking pains," no one would be more a woman of genius than she. And all the pains were taken in the fulfilment of duty and the service of England.

The duty and the service, that is, as she understood them. She was anxious to do the full work and maintain the full powers of the Crown. But the course she actually took did neither of these things. The work she liked doing was done in secret, and some of it, her private management of such difficult crises as those of 1869 and 1885, and of several difficult changes of Ministry, was admirable, such as no other person could possibly have done. But those successes were possible precisely because her position placed her at an impersonal height above parties and even above policies. It should have helped her to see that it was not her most essential business to have opinions of her own about measures of internal or even of foreign policy. Her most essential function was to be visible, a personification of the nation seen by the people and awakening the people's imagination. She could not govern as Elizabeth governed, but she could still do what Elizabeth had done better than any English Sovereign. Her actual interventions in the field of legislation —the most noticeable is, perhaps, the Public Worship Regulation Act, which was more or less forced on Disraeli by her—were not commonly happy. As a rule her pressure on her Ministers simply failed. They received her remonstrances with respect and then went on very much as before. Probably this process has now gone undesirably far. The King ought not to be quite an automaton even in these matters of legislation. He ought to be a kind of

presence of perpetual common sense, representing permanence as against the transience of Ministers, recalling the past and preparing for the future, as men who only came into office yesterday and are afraid of being turned out to-morrow cannot always be trusted to do. But this can only be by suggestion and not by authority. And the Queen might perhaps have had more authority if she had been more careful to use all her opportunities for strengthening her public position. Only a strong public position could enforce her private influence. As it was she ran too much after the will o' the wisp of direct political power, and tended to neglect the ceremonial and other functions which would have increased her indirect influence. She gave up her predecessors' practice of proroguing Parliament and she seldom opened it. She lived constantly away from London, visibly apart from the machine of Government. She went abroad, as none of her predecessors had done, without making any provision for the appointment of persons to perform the Royal functions in her absence. In all these ways she produced the last impression she wished to produce, and quite a false impression too, that the machine worked equally well without the Sovereign. It was not in fact working without the Sovereign. Her laborious and incessant reading and writing saw to that. But to have been seen in London in daily contact with her Ministers would have strengthened her far more than all those official boxes, travelling unseen

between Windsor or Osborne and Whitehall. And if she would have taken a hint from the "progresses" of Elizabeth, the most popular thing ever done by an English Sovereign; if she would have sometimes left the boxes unopened for a while and travelled in a carriage by slow stages from Windsor to Balmoral; what a position, yes and what a power, she would have won! As it was, by her visible goodness, by her simplicity and tenderness, by her open sympathy with her people's sorrows and her open call for theirs in her own, she gained what no Sovereign had had before her—the affections of the whole English people. But if they could have seen her, there is almost no limit to what she might have gained.

In another way too perhaps, an official and legal way, she might have strengthened the power of the Sovereign, but did in fact allow it to be rather weakened. The Crown is the fountain of all honour and all office. The Queen knew this well, and was more tenacious than her successors have been of the royal rights in those matters. But even she was scarcely as tenacious as she should and could have been. The very height and distance of the Crown makes it the ideal judge of the advice given to it about honours and promotions. If the Queen had from the first and to the last absolutely refused to grant honours for which her Ministers could not give her really good reasons she would have strengthened the whole weight of the Crown in the working of the constitutional

machine. Ministers would not have dared to quarrel with her, for the country would never have tolerated a political crisis caused by the insistence of the Ministers on the promotion of some vain or ambitious Baron to an Earldom, or of some intriguing journalist or party hack to a Baronetcy or a Knighthood. The victory would always have been with the Queen, and it would have increased her political power in the best way. And it would have been quite easy if she had cared as much about it as she did about correspondence on matters of policy on which she could not prevail.

On the whole it must be admitted that the choice she made of the work she would do was a tragic mistake. Her temperament and her husband's tastes and example led her to spend a very laborious life in trying to do what she could not do, what was not in fact her function; and consequently, as the unavoidable result, to neglect other things which were her function and which she could have done. That was again the tragedy of a hereditary position which she did not choose for herself. Most of us, free men and women, are probably right as a rule in thinking that the thing we most like doing, provided the liking be that of our whole and highest nature, is what it is our duty to do. The young man who has the instinct for art or soldiering will generally be a better man as artist or soldier than he will as anything else. But the Queen had her choice made for her at her birth. And it called her to a function capable of two inter-

pretations. And she chose the one she liked best, which unfortunately was the wrong one. She would like to have been a permanent civil servant, sitting all day in Whitehall, reading and writing official papers and often deciding policies about which others were to make a great figure in public. That is what she tried all her life to be, but of course failed in being. She could and did spend her life over official papers. But she could not decide policies. And she was born to make a great figure in public, and, with all her reluctance, could not always escape doing so.

Her life, in fact, seems to be divided between a failure and a success. Happily the success is by far the more important. What she failed in was the thing to which she gave almost all her industry and will; her success, a success beyond all parallel, almost beyond all measure, lay in a direction which she scarcely understood, which perhaps of all her Ministers only Disraeli was capable of understanding. That pathetic daily industry did not very greatly modify either home or foreign policy. But while she was toiling at it in vain, she was, all unaware, becoming a legend. Her name was a word of veneration all over the earth. I remember being told by a lady who had travelled among Arabs and by some imprudent conduct had got into difficulties with fanatics, that she believed she might have been killed if her assailants had not taken up her box and read on it her name, which, happily for her, was the great name of

Victoria. The Queen in her old age seems to have conquered both space and time. She once told a friend that she supposed she was the only person who ever outlived four generations of distinguished contemporaries, explaining that by contemporaries she meant those with whom she had daily (and almost exclusively) to work. There are other cases, perhaps—Louis XIV. for instance—but hers is extraordinary enough. Her own generation, as she said, she never knew. She was brought up with the old, and when she came to the Throne she began by living with Melbourne, and then he died; then with Peel and Russell and Palmerston, and then they died; then with Disraeli and Gladstone, and then they died; and still she lived on with Lord Salisbury and Lord Rosebery and Mr. Balfour. And whether she thought of it or not, what one may call her gradual extension in space was as remarkable as her duration in time. When she came to the Throne, the name of the Queen of England meant little outside this island. When she died an awe of silence fell not only on the whole people of Great Britain from Court to cottage, but on every Royal House in Europe, and far beyond Europe, on Indian palaces, on African and Polynesian huts. Victoria had become a legend and a mystery; her name called out the affectionate devotion of millions who had never seen her; it was a charm and a spell throughout the vast world of her Empire. 'The final years," as Mr. Strachey says, " were years of apotheosis." His word makes one

think of the Sovereigns whose position of all in history was at once most like and most unlike hers. The Roman Emperors ruled as she did over a vast and world-wide Empire. Very few of their subjects had ever seen them; all reverenced the mysterious majesty of Cæsar. For the Senate and the Consuls and all the rest of the still nominally subsisting constitutional paraphernalia of the great Republic they cared next to nothing. The whole greatness of Rome had become embodied in a person, and inevitably, as things were then, that person was conceived as something more than human, as a Divine Presence ruling and protecting the world. Queen Victoria's direct and personal share in governing her Empire was, as we have seen, a small one. Her individual opinions or caprices did not make or unmake laws and fortunes as did those of Augustus and his successors. But like them she, and she alone, held her multiple and various Empire together by the single link of her throne and name, the one thing all held in common veneration. Her genuine modesty —" if they only knew me," she would say when she heard of some fulsome newspaper adulation —and her sincere piety would of course have shrunk in horror from the deification permitted or encouraged by the Emperors. But it is likely enough that there were not a few primitive places in which she was actually worshipped. And, apart from anything of that kind, she had in reality a kind of religious position. For she was not only the ultimate and mysterious symbol

of the British Empire. The British flag could play that part as the Roman eagle could for Rome. But the Queen was more than the flag. She was more than a mere symbol ; she was what a symbol becomes when it is the thing which it symbolises : she was at once the appearance and the reality, all that the flag is and all that it cannot be, the sacramental unity, visible and embodied, of the British race and Empire. Perhaps she could never have become all that if she had not been a woman and lived to be very old. But what she half unconsciously won, others can receive and maintain. If they do so the Monarchy may play a very high part in shaping the future destiny of our race. But whatever her successors may achieve, to her will always belong the glory of inauguration. It may be that when the ultimate story comes to be told, it will be seen that it was the Monarchy more than anything else which gave imaginative and emotional unity to all the diverse worlds of Britain. If so, many kings may have made their contribution to the great result. But the first tribute and the highest will still have to be paid to the Queen who for sixty-three years reigned in ever greater fame and honour over an ever-widening Empire, and half unconsciously, as great things are often done, gathered to herself its faith and loyalty till she seemed the promise of a destiny of which without her it could not have dreamt. Fate has its unconscious ways and silent premonitions. It was not for nothing that by a kind of accident and against her father's will, the

child of destiny who was born in 1819 was at the very last moment, as she lay already in the arms of the archbishop, unexpectedly given the great name of Victoria.

II

THE POLITICAL LIFE OF DISRAELI, 1837–1846 *

It will be universally admitted that Mr. Monypenny's second volume † is far more interesting than his first. The story he tells here is one of the most dazzling in our Parliamentary annals. There is no more trumpeting and skirmishing now; we are in the thick of the fight, the first, most daring, and most entirely triumphant of all Disraeli's combats. No subsequent victories can ever give back to the victor the exultant delight of the first triumph of youth. David was a man of war all his life, but he can never have been so happy as on the day he slew Goliath. These pages show Disraeli slaying his Goliath. After that, as a political soldier, the highest he could hope for was to live up to his reputation. Chatham was a greater man than Disraeli; but Disraeli's victorious single combat with Peel was a far greater achievement than Chatham's share in the assaults of the brilliant band who at last compelled Walpole and Walpole's successors to surrender. Our knowledge of Chatham's speeches is limited and uncertain;

* *Times* Literary Supplement, November 14, 1912.

† "The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield," by William Flavelle Monypenny. Volume II., 1837–1846. (Murray. 12*s*. net.)

but, while it is safe to say that he was a greater orator than Disraeli, it is almost equally safe to say that in one kind of oratory, in invective, he can never have equalled the great series of attacks under which Peel writhed between 1843 and 1846, which none of the hearers ever forgot and some of them, not the least important, never forgave.

There is nothing quite like them in our political history. The nearest parallel is that already mentioned, the assault of the "patriots" on Walpole. Charles Fox did splendid work in the long attack on Lord North, but invective to be really powerful needs more than a touch of venom, and that could not be found in the most good-natured of men attacking the most easy-going of Prime Ministers whom no insults could provoke out of a smile. Lowe's great assaults upon the Reform Ministry of 1866 are a nearer parallel to the power of Disraeli's speeches, but they struck rather at a political theory than at a man. To find a real rival to Disraeli in this use of the highest powers of speech to do to death a personal and political enemy we have to go further afield. The nearest parallel of all is the great series of speeches in which Cicero poured out the hatred of years upon the enemy who in his eyes was both morally and politically the vilest of men. The parallel is unfortunately made the closer by the fact that both Cicero and Disraeli had been in friendly relations, publicly as well as privately, with the victims of their murderous attack. On the other hand Disraeli, unlike Cicero, had to face the

immense difficulty of assailing a man of established character without any character of his own to support the attack. The universal opinion of his countrymen, and still more of the House of Commons, set Peel's character in the highest and strongest of positions, defended by fortifications which were the work of many years. Disraeli was at the bottom and had the whole hill to climb. He had none of the artillery of official experience, or party connexion, or personal character to bring to bear on the enemy's walls, which without them seemed unassailable. Yet he took the fortress in the end, almost alone, by his own unaided genius. The "organised hypocrisy" was destroyed; and though Peel succeeded in the great task he had in hand he was never again the leader of a great party. To any one who wishes to maintain a real moral standard in political life, the question of Disraeli's character is inevitably raised by this episode. Mr. Monypenny does not shirk it. At least, he makes no pretence of denying that a general distrust of Disraeli existed, or that if his character had stood higher many things would have been different in the history of those years. It is probable, for instance, that in that case he would have received office in 1841. Nor did the difficulty end with these years. When Mr. Monypenny comes to the story of that thirty years' exile in the wilderness which the Conservative Party had to suffer after 1846, he will, no doubt, have to admit that one of the causes of it was the fact that Disraeli was at once indis-

pensable and impossible. That feeling lingered even after he had been Prime Minister, as is shown by the fact that in the early seventies a secret conclave of Tory magnates met to consider his deposition from the leadership. Only after the victory of 1874 did it entirely disappear. Then, indeed, when he was too old and too tired to do much except enjoy it, he became the idol and autocrat of his party, the almost equal friend of his Sovereign, the accepted and admired ruler of the nation. But, even so, something of the same sort revived after his death. Many people explained the long delay in publishing his biography by assuming that his papers disclosed too much that his friends could have no desire to make public. As far as one can judge the assumption is entirely untrue. Mr. Monypenny writes with an appearance of perfect candour, and his investigation of all that there is to investigate has evidently not deprived his hero of his respect.

The worst charge ever made against Disraeli relates to those years. It is certain that in 1841 he (and, with or without his knowledge, his wife) wrote to Peel asking for office; and it is equally certain that in 1844 he said in a speech at Shrewsbury, "I never asked for a place"; and when, at the height of their duel in 1846, Peel alluded to his application, Disraeli assured the House of Commons that "nothing of the kind ever occurred." What is to be said of these proceedings? Everybody then, as now, knew that Peel was incapable of falsehood; nobody was

very sure about Disraeli. If Lord Althorp or the late Duke of Devonshire had said what Disraeli said, all would have been certain that there was some curious lapse of memory on his side or on Peel's. But Disraeli, as usual, suffered from his lack of character, and the general impression was simply that he had lied. And that is still the accepted, and perhaps the correct, view. It is the one frankly taken by his biographer, who states it and comments: "He must pay the full penalty. Let the politician who is without sin in the matter of veracity cast the first stone."

On this there are, perhaps, two things to be said. Some of us may not be willing so lightly to surrender the truthfulness of our statesmen, and may claim that an important distinction should be made. No one supposes that politicians always tell the truth. But there are untruths and untruths. A scrupulous man would prefer not to say that he expected to be at the top of the poll when he was fighting a hopeless seat. But such statements deceive nobody and are, perhaps, no more lies than our conventional expressions of regret at our inability to dine with a dull acquaintance. A more important class of political untruth is that almost imposed upon statesmen by the necessities of the State or—what they often value nearly as highly—of their party. A Minister is asked whether a foreign or colonial Government has made a certain proposal, or whether a governor or a general has desired to resign. The proposal or resignation has in fact been made; but it is hoped to

get it withdrawn and restore the *status quo*. That will be impossible if the facts get known. To decline to deny them is, in fact, often tantamount to an admission. It seems necessary here to deny on public grounds, as even the austere Johnson allowed a man might legitimately do, when a lawful secret could be kept in no other way. No doubt a man had better be very strict about indulging even in this sort of untruth. But it is fair to say, in answer to Mr. Monypenny, that it is this sort, and not any other, of which statesmen must be admitted to have often been guilty; and that it is a very different sort from the merely self-interested lie which he believes Disraeli told, and against which it is to be hoped many politicians might justly cast their stone. But is it certain that it was a lie? The evidence appears at first sight irresistible. But there is something to be said on behalf of a plea for doubt and the benefit of doubt. Whether Disraeli was a knave or not, no one thinks he was a fool. Would any one but a fool have run the tremendous risk of Peel's overwhelming him by the production of his letter? Is it impossible that Disraeli had forgotten the letter or that he had the impression that he had been much more guarded in it than in fact he had? We have seen stranger and more rapid lapses of memory in our time about what was or was not said at meetings between statesmen, and nobody has doubted the *bona fides* of both the contradictory accounts. There is one other point. Why should so practised a

debater as Disraeli have resorted to a very dangerous lie in his defence when he had an obvious and perfectly satisfactory debating answer to Peel's point? Peel asked how Disraeli could have been willing to serve him if he really thought as badly of his earlier career as he now asserted. The answer was obvious. A man may deal in questionable transactions once or twice and his character may be so good that you may be certain he had no wrong intention, and may be perfectly ready to trust him. But when he finally commits forgery you see the earlier proceedings in the light of the later crime. Whether Disraeli was an honest man or not there was nothing incompatible with honesty in trusting Peel in 1841 and yet saying in 1846, after Peel had used a Protectionist majority to force Repeal of the Corn Laws on the country, that that proceeding threw a lurid light on his whole past.

No wise man, however, would accept a brief to make a saint, even a political saint, of Disraeli. Human motives are mixed things, and no one probably serves his country without being influenced in some degree by the ambition of fame or power for himself. Mr. Gladstone probably fancied that the public service was the only thing he had in view in his political career. But moral men are perhaps even more liable than others to self-deception; and it is certain that Mr. Gladstone, like all strong and healthy people, liked getting his own way because it was his own way and not at all solely because he

believed it was a way of safety for his country. Disraeli, a far more clear-sighted man, both about his own character and about other matters, did not conceal the truth from himself or others. When he talks in "Coningsby" of the motives that induce men to enter public life, the highest he mentions is "public reputation." When he speaks to his constituents of the same subject and comes to deal with his own motives, he says, "I will tell you what they are. I love fame; I love public reputation; I love to live in the eyes of the country; and it is a glorious thing for a man to do who has had my difficulties to contend against." That is a frank statement; an avowal of no ignoble ambition, certainly; but the desired goal is not one that would have completely satisfied Burke or Peel, Gladstone or Salisbury. All these men, not so much as some of them thought perhaps, but in each case to a very real degree, were in public life because they hoped to serve the country. It is doubtful whether that motive seriously influenced Disraeli. To turn from Peel's papers to Disraeli's political writings or his greater speeches is to turn from the limited outlook of a year or a generation, of a single party or people, to that of all political time and all political existence; but to turn from Disraeli's letters back to Peel's is to turn from a world of vanity and intrigue and self-seeking to one of unsparing and single-minded devotion to the public service.

The two men were probably too unlike ever to have acted cordially together. Yet, as Mr.

Monypenny shows in this volume, it was some time before they drew apart. Peel went out of his usual way to applaud loudly the famous first speech, and to say that it was "just the reverse" of a failure; he was very civil socially to Disraeli, paid him marked compliments in the Lobby, and in 1840 invited him to a conference of Tory leaders where he was the only man who had not held office. Even so late as 1844 he complimented him in a speech, and his sister wrote to Mrs. Disraeli and urged that when they next met the younger man should hold out his hand, promising that the older would gladly accept it. But then it was too late. That may or may not have been originally due to the refusal of office in 1841. It is at any rate fair to Disraeli to say that he continued to support Peel very warmly for two years, and in 1843 went down to Shrewsbury and made a great defence of Peel, and especially of his moderate Free Trade measures of 1842, declaring both against high protection and against unconditional abolition of the duties, and insisting on commercial reform as the traditional Tory policy from the days of Shelburne and Pitt, with reciprocity as an essential part of it. This and other speeches made at the same time at any rate show that Disraeli was in no hurry to desert Peel, though he publicly promised his constituents that he would do so if Peel broke his pledges. It is far from being proved, therefore, that the motive of his revolt was revenge. But why had Peel excluded him, after so many marks of confidence? Was it because, as was customary

in those days, the great families absorbed all the spoils as a matter of course? Or was it, as is still customary, that the principle of the claim of the man to the office, which makes all bad appointments, was dominant over that of the claim of the office to the best man who can be found, which makes all good ones? Apparently it was neither. Mr. Monypenny makes two interesting revelations on the subject. First he tells us, on the high authority of George Smythe, Disraeli's intimate friend and Peel's subsequent colleague, that Peel wished to give Disraeli office. And he adds, on the authority of Lord Houghton, that the man who prevented his doing so was Stanley, soon to be Peel's rival and Disraeli's leader, but at that moment so hostile to Disraeli that he declared that "if that scoundrel were taken in he would not remain himself." Three years later, whether in conscious revenge or not, Disraeli used of Stanley the famous phrase which, first uttered in contempt, has survived as a compliment. "The noble lord is the Prince Rupert of Parliamentary discussion: his charge is resistless: but when he returns from the pursuit he always finds his camp in the possession of the enemy." Such were the strange beginnings of the long association between the two men who were to share the leadership of a party for over twenty years; and such are the ironies of political life. A still more curious one is given by Mr. Monypenny in a note which relates how in 1877 Peel's daughter-in-law wrote to Lord Beaconsfield, much as Mrs.

Disraeli had written to Peel, to inform him that her husband was "most anxious to serve" him in the event of a vacancy in his Ministry.

But it must not be supposed that there is nothing in this volume but the story of the relations between Disraeli and Peel. On the contrary, there are many other things—his marriage, two of his three greatest novels, his leadership of "Young England," his curious and rather ambiguous intimacy with Louis Philippe, and a whole series of speeches in which his political genius is seen at its highest. The most interesting personal event is, of course, his marriage with Mrs. Wyndham Lewis, the widow of his colleague in the representation of Maidstone. His financial position was always embarrassed, and, when he married a woman twelve years older than himself but endowed with four or five thousand a year, the world of course said that he had married for money. And the world was no doubt so far right that he would probably not have married her if her income had been counted only by hundreds. She herself used to say laughingly in later years, "Dizzy married me for my money, but if he had the chance again he would marry me for love." He also sometimes said much the same; and he wrote to her, six months before the marriage, in the only serious quarrel they ever had, "I avow, when I first made my advances to you, I was influenced by no romantic feelings." But, as Mr. Monypenny well says, it was characteristic of the man, as indeed of all men of the world, to acquiesce in

explanations of his conduct which attributed more importance than was the fact to lower motives and less to higher; and no woman says her husband married her for money unless she is quite sure he did not. No doubt he was no more unwilling than any other man that his wife should have a good income; but the answer to the baser accusation is threefold. First, that he evidently felt a considerable attraction for Mrs. Lewis during her husband's life, when he could not have thought either of her hand or of her money; second, that during the quarrel already mentioned he wrote her a letter ridiculing her fortune, a risk a mere fortune-hunter would scarcely have run; and, third, that all through his life he was admittedly the most devoted and admiring of husbands. It is true that none of the three arguments is conclusive; but together they at least entitle him once more to the "benefit of the doubt." In any case, it is certain that, whatever its motive, his marriage was by far the most fortunate event in his private life with which he had himself anything to do. Its only possible rival was what was done for him by those foolish Elders of the Bevis Marks Synagogue who forced a quarrel on his father and led to the young Benjamin's being carried to the Christian font, which was then a necessary preliminary to a political career.

Mr. Monypenny has devoted much less space to his hero's private life in this volume than in the last. Perhaps he is right. In some respects, indeed, Disraeli always wanted a public stage

to be seen to advantage. Genius, courage, and ability, of which he had so much, find their best or only field in public life. It is other qualities of which he had little—such things as simplicity and intimacy—which make the charm of descriptions of private life. To be perfectly simple and direct, either in word, act, or feeling, was at all times almost impossible to him, whether in great things or small. And his intimacies were very few. His sister and his wife seem to have been at this time the only people to whom he wrote or spoke with perfect directness, without any ulterior object, in the simple desire of giving and receiving pleasure. All the other letters have a note in them which suggests that the recipients were something more or less than friends, his patrons, his tools, or his present or future political allies. Their interest is public, not private. And few readers will regret to find here fewer letters of foreign travel, the most tedious phase of biography. Even the small social details—and some of those given here are very small: "I went down to Rosebank to a *petit bal* given by the Londonderrys"—are more interesting because more significant of the man than the foreign letters. Of course, Disraeli no more travelled than he dressed or dined or spoke exactly like other men. But his letters from abroad necessarily go over common ground and give us less of himself than of the sights he saw. And it is himself that we want. Of that his biographer cannot give us too much. So even the apparently trifling social doings and

feelings recorded here have their importance. For they show us that the mysterious and oracular Disraeli was a man of pleasure as well as a man of genius; and the difficulties he had to conquer in his political struggle are illustrated by his frank confessions of triumph over the invitations he received from great ladies and the compliments paid him by great men. The taste for material magnificences which he retained to the end, and which, though shared by many Englishmen, was in him regarded as un-English and Oriental, is, of course, conspicuous; and we hear a good deal in the letters about gold plate and fine liveries.

Another thing which was in him to the end is also illustrated in this volume, his inborn gifts as a courtier. Nothing in Mr. Monypenny's story is more curious than the account of Disraeli's relations with Louis Philippe. Disraeli went to Paris in 1842, a young and unofficial, though well-known, member of Parliament. The Court was in mourning; but, though great personages like "the Ailesburys, the Stanhopes, and Russian Princes" could not obtain a reception, Disraeli had several long private audiences with the King. It is strange reading to the present generation to find a foreign Sovereign anxious to balance an uncertain position at home by the support of the English Ministry and House of Commons. And it is stranger still, and not altogether satisfactory, to find Disraeli submitting to the King a Memorandum as to the ways and means of arousing sympathy in England, and

hinting at the expense involved in action either in Parliament or in the Press. But it is evident that his efforts were entirely devoted to the patriotic object of creating a better understanding between the two countries; as they were again in 1845, when Louis Philippe's dislike of Palmerston was supposed to make his return to office difficult or impossible, and Disraeli did his best to make things smoother by talking to the King and writing to Palmerston. The whole episode is very curious—the most curious point of all being the apparent admission on all hands that a foreign Sovereign's favour could be valuable, and almost necessary, to an English Minister.

But of course the most important thing in the book is what it shows us of the development of Disraeli's political ideas, and their illustration in his speeches and in the two great novels. It is here also that Mr. Monypenny is seen at his best. His introductory dissertations on such subjects as the "condition of England" after the Reform Act, the Corn Law controversy, the Tory Idea, the character and personality of Peel, and others, are admirably written and lift the book above the level of a mere biographical record. Many of these topics are still matters of dispute, and not everybody will accept Mr. Monypenny's view of them; but everybody will agree that what he writes shows real and wide knowledge as well as that living insight into his subject which belongs only to those who care as well as know. And he is at least as

impartial as can be expected of Disraeli's biographer, who may fairly be excused for not letting "the Whig dogs have the best of it." No man, indeed, who has been living for months among the splendid lights and large spaces of the Disraelian political ideas can be expected to do full justice to the dull probity of Peel and the narrow earnestness of Cobden, or to show any mercy to the emptiness and incapacity of the Whigs. The illumination that comes from Disraeli is no doubt occasionally of the nature of limelight; but when all deductions have been made it remains true that in the novels and speeches dealt with in this volume alone there is more matter for political thought than in all the utterances of all the other English statesmen of the nineteenth century put together. Alone, almost, of English statesmen, certainly in marked contrast to his two great rivals, Peel and Gladstone, Disraeli looked upon politics as a universal science. While their East and West meant Norfolk and Devonshire, his meant the Old World and the New. While their before and after meant the last Session and the next, his meant the age of the Patriarchs or the Romans and the final destinies to which free government may be led in the ultimate future. Burke, a far greater mind, partly because a more sober, sincere, and exact, is his only rival among English statesmen as a political thinker. No one who reads Disraeli's books with open eyes can for a moment suppose them to be merely the work of a self-advertising political adventurer. An adventurer would not

have denounced his own party as "an organised hypocrisy" or irritated the class whom he meant to lead by saying that he had "never heard of a peer with an ancient lineage." Disraeli had many faults but his mind was an ever-flowing fountain of ideas; and where ideas exist they are never deterred from flowing by the consideration that they may drown their friends. So the young spokesman of the feudal aristocracy did not hesitate to impress upon his noble friends that it was the very essence of feudalism to make the tenure of property depend upon the performance of its duties. So the leader of the protectionist squires put aside the cry of "burdens on the land" and said that those who had great honours must expect great burdens. So the Tory apologist held out his hand to the hated Chartists and had the courage, as well as the brains, to take a view of the social revolution of which Lord Morley has said that it was "wider if it did not go deeper than that of any other contemporary observer." So, once more, the future leader of the party that had opposed the Reform Bill was already contemplating the bestowal of political power on an "educated and enfranchised people." In all these matters he can scarcely be refused the credit of seeing further than any of his rivals. The author of "Sybil" stood almost alone in his clear-sighted protest against the narrow commercialism of that day, the ugly results of which are the chief difficulty of our own. He more than any one else saw that the Corn Law

difficulty was no mere economic question of rents, as the Protectionists thought, or of profits, as their opponents thought, but involved large political, social, and international considerations as to what was to be held the healthiest state of national existence. He, again almost alone in that day, knew that history, imagination, and the national idea must play a large part in the politics of any great people. And he saw the potentialities for the highest service that lay, increasingly ignored, in the ancient Monarchy of England.

The question of most practical interest perhaps, as one looks back on all this after seventy years, is whether the accidents that denied Disraeli any chance of putting his political ideas—a creed, as he always called them, not a mere programme—to the test of practice was, or was not, one of those great lost opportunities with which the pages of history are strewn. When he did reach power the hour for action was past and the actor's failing energies were fully employed elsewhere. What would have happened if he had had in 1854 the position which did not come till 1874? It is interesting to ask such questions, but, of course, impossible to answer them. Disraeli had courage enough for anything; but had he character enough, had he enough patience of detail, to force upon a "stupid" party the reforms which would have prevented the great towns continuing to develop in the wretched conditions he had set forth in "Sybil"? He probably really cared about this

question; and certainly he cared about the maintenance of a healthy and manly rural population. Probably he would not have ignored the whole problem, as the complacent commercialism of the Whigs did; but had he the driving power needed to make the landed class take long views and accept sacrifices for the purpose of creating a peasantry out of a horde of landless labourers? We are on surer ground where the way was clearer as in the question of national defence. If he had been in power in the sixties England, one may be certain, would not have cut the sorry figure she did in 1864 and in 1870. It is certain, again, that he would have insisted on keeping the House of Lords a living, visible, and active part of the Constitution, and would never have let it fall into that silence of senile decay which was almost imposed upon it by the over-worked indifference of Lord Salisbury. And the Monarchy? As to that, he certainly would never have admitted the view now given out with semi-official authority, that it is the duty of the Sovereign to accept without demur or question any policy proposed to him by his Ministers; nor indeed would Queen Victoria or any of her Prime Ministers. He did something for a higher ideal in his last years; and, if he had had power in his more vigorous days, he might have endeavoured to assert the true position of the Sovereign as no mere conduit pipe for the issue of Cabinet decrees, but a real political force, the permanent adviser of both parties, an adviser almost inevitably preserved by his

position from sharing the narrowness of either. But, whether or not he had the capacity for these things, the real opportunity for them was not given him. For posterity he will be greater as a political thinker, and as a gladiator in the Parliamentary arena, than as a constructive statesman.

III

THE POLITICAL LIFE OF DISRAELI, 1846–1855 *

THE third volume of the great Life of Disraeli † has a new name on its title-page. The author of the first two died very soon after the publication of the second. He had laid a good foundation for the great edifice, and all his readers heard with regret of the premature death which prevented his building upon it. That task has now fallen to a friend and colleague, much older than himself, who, before Mr. Monypenny had ever written a line of any sort, had already attained what readers of *The Times* may be pardoned for thinking the highest position open to an English journalist. It was known that Mr. Monypenny had throughout his work been in frequent consultation with Mr. Buckle, and there was no surprise mingled with the general approval which greeted the announcement that Mr. Buckle had been entrusted with the difficult task of completing his friend's work. Mr. Monypenny's name still remains on the title-page of the present volume, but it appears that

* *Times* Literary Supplement, November 26, 1914.

† "The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield," by William Flavelle Monypenny and George Earle Buckle. Volume III., 1846–1855. (Murray. 12*s*. net.)

nothing in it except part of the chapter on "Tancred" owes more to him than the classification of its material.

It is never easy to take up another man's work, but it may be said at once that Mr. Buckle has succeeded. The new volume will be eagerly read by all who read its predecessors, and certainly not with less enjoyment. It has the same lucidity as they, the same fairness of mind, the same wide knowledge of English political history, the same reassuring quietness of judgment. And in continuing a work which he did not plan or begin Mr. Buckle has admirably escaped both the opposite dangers of a breach of continuity and of sinking his personality in that of his predecessor. If he has erred in either direction, it is rather in the latter than the former. Few men have had a closer knowledge than he of the world of English politics since 1886. The interest of the present volume is often heightened by allusions to the later history of questions already discussed in the forties and fifties. But Mr. Buckle might well go farther in this direction in his next volume. The greatness of English politics lies in their continuity. And much of their interest belongs to the same quality. The peculiar success of Lord Rosebery's "Pitt" was by no means all due to its author's literary gift; it was largely due to the fact that he had been Prime Minister, and that his readers could everywhere detect allusions to the political situation of their own day and to the author's own experiences and opinions. Mr. Buckle has

not been Prime Minister. But for over twenty years he had special opportunities of knowing the political and personal problems which beset Prime Ministers, the constant difficulty for all public men of adjusting the difficult balance between individual convictions and the just claims of party loyalty, the ignoble intrigues and the honourable self-surrenders which are always going on behind the fair scene of confidence and unanimity which all Ministries try to present to the public. These things are the very stuff of this volume, and will be of its successors. Let Mr. Buckle have the courage not to confine himself too rigidly to the *rôle* of a narrator. Let him come more frankly forward as a critic and a political thinker. He will be all the better biographer for bringing the light of his own times and his own observation to bear on the contemporary materials out of which he has to construct his book.

And he may find the needed space for a freer personal intervention by retrenchments in other directions. The only two criticisms that can be made on his work are just those to which Mr. Monypenny was also open. There is too little of himself and too much of Disraeli. He seems often afraid of giving us anything, however interesting, of his own; he is never afraid of giving us anything and everything, however uninteresting, about his hero. Seventeen pages will be found by most people a good deal more than enough about the history of a weekly newspaper called *The Press* which Disraeli

founded and supported for a few years; and the few words in which Lord Morley dismissed a certain rather sordid squabble between Gladstone and Disraeli about Downing Street furniture show a juster sense of proportion than the four pages which Mr. Buckle devotes to it. Other instances might be given. Perhaps Mr. Buckle feels himself bound by the biographical scale set by his predecessor. But may he not be overlooking more important considerations? This volume only carries us over nine years. It shows us Disraeli arriving with difficulty first at the leadership of his party in the Commons, then at the second place in a Cabinet. He was yet to live twenty-six years, during which he was twice Prime Minister and one of the most important figures on the stage of European politics. If the present scale is maintained, can the book ever be finished? And if it is, will any library be able to find room for it?

I

The new volume gives us Disraeli at last in office, but it contains nothing so exciting as the campaign against Peel which was the principal subject of its predecessor. It takes us through the troubled and uncertain period which lasted from the fall of Peel to the beginning of the ten years' supremacy of Palmerston. For Disraeli it was a time of steadily increasing political importance. In 1846 he was merely the brilliant gladiator who had given the mortal stab to Peel.

In 1855 he had led his party in the Commons for several years, had led the House itself for several months, and had been Chancellor of the Exchequer. It was no small thing to have got so far; but nine years are a long slice out of a man's political life, and there is plain evidence that Disraeli often felt that the prize might come too late or never come at all. During these years, and especially after the death of Lord George Bentinck had left the leadership in the Commons vacant, he had three tasks to achieve. He had to convince his party that he, and he alone, could lead them; he had to make them go his way and not their own; and he had to win for them the confidence of the country and the resulting victory at the polls. The first two he in the main accomplished: in the third he failed. The surprising thing, as we look back, is not the failure but the success. He had in his path at least five immense obstacles: the inveterate hostility of the Peelites; the laziness and indifference of Lord Derby; the *damnosa hæreditas* of Protection; the misfortune of having to lead a party which understood few of his ideas and could provide him with no help in debate; and above all the eccentricity of his own genius and character. In vain did he buy a landed property, discard flowered waistcoats, and attend farmers' dinners. All could see that he was not an English gentleman in the sense that all other statesmen of those days were; and the majority suspected that flashy clothes, flashy novels, and even Jewish blood were not

the worst of the things which had separated him from English gentlemen.

Then the bitter attacks upon Peel which had won him a place in the front rank of politicians were one of the chief causes that kept him out of real power for five and twenty years. The Peelites were cold and self-righteous people of the sort that never finds forgiveness the easiest of the virtues. They never forgave Disraeli, and by so doing they made a strong Conservative Ministry impossible. There is no doubt that if Gladstone, Graham, and Sidney Herbert would have rejoined their party in 1851, 1852, or 1855 it would have at once recovered that position of equality with the Whig-Radical enemy which in the event it did not recover till 1874. But the Peelites hated Disraeli and despised his followers, who in their turn detested the Peelites. Disraeli himself, like all men whose vision extends beyond the passing scene, neither shared nor quite understood these petty animosities. He was prepared to serve under a Peelite or under Palmerston, as was twice proposed, if by so doing he could assist the party. But neither plan proved possible. Both broke on the fatal rock of Protection. Palmerston had no personal prejudices against Disraeli, and would have accepted the leadership in 1852 but for the dubious attitude of Lord Derby on the question of Protection and Free Trade.

Except his own reputation, this was Disraeli's greatest difficulty. He very soon perceived that Protection in the landlord and farmer

meaning of the word was not only "dead but damned." All through the first half of this volume he is seen struggling to deliver his leader and his party from the blindness which still fancied that Peel's work could be undone. In this, let it be said in parenthesis, he was perfectly justified. In the first place, he never had been a believer in the extreme Protectionist theory. But, even if he had been, he had the right to bow to the *chose jugée*. Political life would be impossible if a man of honour were bound to ruin himself and his party by obstinately trying to force on the country a single item of his political creed so universally unpopular that the very mention of it prevents his getting a hearing for the others. A man may even to-day privately believe in absolute monarchy or rotten boroughs, for both of which institutions there is much to be said. But if he is to play a part in public affairs he must leave such things alone. A statesman's duty is to take a large, even a bold, view of the possibilities of a situation, and then to aim at the best he can have any hope of obtaining. With impossibilities he has nothing to do. It is for him to know when the pear is ripe, and then to pluck it instantly. His intervention in the process of ripening it, which belongs to others in less responsible positions, often merely delays or endangers the result. It is at least arguable that Mr. Gladstone's hasty action in 1886 actually delayed Home Rule by the passion of opposition it aroused, and that Mr. Chamberlain's crusade in 1903 merely

stiffened and hardened the Free Trade sentiment of the country, which had insensibly weakened in the previous generation and would probably have made no fierce resistance to a policy of "broadening the basis of taxation." In each case at any rate the result upon the fortunes of the party and of the other policies for which the party stood is only too evident. Pioneer work of this kind should be done by people who can be repudiated.

Disraeli's difficulty, however, with Lord Derby was not that he anticipated public opinion, but that he lagged behind it. He clung to Protection long after all chance of reviving it had passed away. Disraeli resisted in private and in public; but after all Derby, and not he, was leader. Derby was lazy, fonder of Homer and of racing than of politics, and disinclined to those social and public activities which might have at once consolidated his party and taught him the real mind of the country. Consequently his own mind, to the despair of Disraeli, did not move, and naturally ran badly in harness with a mind that did. The result was that the party coach stopped at the Protectionist stage. And the result of that was first the loss of Palmerston and then the loss of the General Election of 1852. Derby, though privately converted, postponed any very public professions of the sort that bind a party till after the elections—that is to say, of course, till they were too late to be of any use. It was, in fact, none of his opponents but his leader who prevented Disraeli from having a

chance of ruling England till he was too old to use it. Derby, like most magnates who have all that this world can offer, did not like to be bothered. He would not work for victory himself, and was not willing to let Disraeli do so. He had not the courage to take office in 1851, nor the openness of mind to keep it in 1852. Worst of all, he let the ball pass to Palmerston in 1855. Disraeli could not afford to quarrel with him, and had simply to swallow in silence the bitter cup of a succession of lost opportunities.

II

It is the common tragedy of genius to spend life in creating its fit surroundings and die before it can use or enjoy them. That was not quite Disraeli's fate, as it has been the fate of so many poets. But it is part of the essence of genius to be original, which means being unlike other people, and to have an irresistible need of self-expression, which means surprising and offending them. Disraeli had all this in him, quite as conspicuously as that other characteristic of genius which has led to its being defined as a capacity for taking pains. This volume is a picture of the struggle between the two. Disraeli is shown in it taking upon himself all the trouble which Derby will not take. We see him conciliating men, encouraging them, driving them; we see him thinking and reading and working. All prudent and practical measures towards the

attainment of success he will take. But that is not the whole man. He must be allowed to be imprudent too. He is no mere Parliamentary manager; he is a man of ideas, and ideas are irrepressible things. Consequently, at the very moment when he is trying to convince a crowd of country squires that he is also a country gentleman and their natural leader, he must publish "Tancred." The greatest of his difficulties was that he was a Jew, and he must needs publish a book which is one prolonged glorification of Judaism. He was distrusted because he was not understood; and by way of winning the confidence of church-going Tories he offered them an identification of Judaism and Christianity and a solution of both into "a great Asian mystery."

Nor was his originality content with the comparatively safe channel of fiction. He went out of his way to introduce his views of the mission and greatness of the Hebrew race into his "Life of Lord George Bentinck." Nay, he made his mysterious and unpalatable opinions the matter of a long speech in the very House of Commons itself, which received it in chilling silence. So faith creates the mountains which it has to remove. Whenever Disraeli's imagination was touched he cast prudence to the winds. Neither the grumbling of his party nor the written protest of Derby prevented his insisting that the time had come for the English nation to realize the vastness of the responsibilities it had undertaken in its Indian Empire. From

first to last Asia could move him more than Europe. India was a part of Asia, and by that bold speech in 1853 he began the work which he crowned twenty-three years later when Queen Victoria assumed the title of Empress of India. But at the moment the speech achieved nothing except new difficulties for the speaker.

That was Disraeli all through. Genius is always greater than the business it undertakes to do. It cannot live without finding for itself its indispensable but often dangerous escapes of the spirit outside and above the field in which it works with other men. So Disraeli, sparring with competent Parliamentarians like Wood and Graham, imposing his leadership on commonplace Tories like Herries and Beresford, doing this necessary business and doing it well, cannot submit to be confined to it. The result is that in Mr. Buckle's hands, as in Mr. Monypenny's, he appears again in solitary distinction among English statesmen, as the one man who took a universal view of politics while all the rest, with the partial exception of Burke, never got beyond an English or at widest a European outlook. His mind refused to be shut up in the question of whether Mr. Speaker was or was not to be got out of the Chair. He was the keenest of party leaders, but he never could help looking beyond the prospects of the Session. He thought of the current problems of party disputes in terms of race and religion and the essential elements of human society, and when speaking about

what was to be done next year in England his foreseeing imagination was often wondering how the expected results might ultimately be affected by what would happen twenty or fifty years later on the Continent of Europe or perhaps in Egypt or India. In the midst of triumphant commercialism he turns to the brooding East and scoffs at the European who

> talks of progress, because by an ingenious application of some scientific acquirements he has established a society which has mistaken comfort for civilization.

He turns from the Budget of 1848 to tell Cobden, in language which now seems almost prophetic, that it is madness to expect universal peace because America and England are rich and contented; wars are made, he says, "not by the Powers which are contented and satisfied, but by the race or prince who agitates for a position." So in the same year he made a still more remarkable prophecy. The Schleswig dispute was beginning, and Disraeli, with rare but unluckily very transient prescience, brushed aside the ostensible pretexts for the action of Prussia, and pointed out that the policy adopted meant an eventual challenge to England on the sea. There is a still more characteristic prophecy, which also finds its fulfilment in the Germany of Nietzsche, to be found in a curious passage in the "Life of Bentinck," where he foresees that the intellectual anarchy of atheism may lead to

"a revival of old national idolatries, modified and mythically dressed up according to the spirit of the age."

This volume is much more exclusively political than its predecessors. But there are some pictures of Disraeli's private life. There is a chapter, unnecessarily long, about his curious friendship with Mrs. Brydges Willyams, giving the letters by which he entertained and flattered that eccentric old lady, which not every one will find so "graceful" as Mr. Buckle considers them. But there is not much else that is not politics or literature. The best, perhaps, is a pleasant little picture of him as a country gentleman, a *rôle* on which he greatly plumed himself. Part of it was, no doubt, a not very successful assumption; but at least in his woods he was entirely at home in his own special way. One would like to have heard his talks with his woodmen. Not the least characteristic touch in his own account of them is the escape from the plantations of Hughenden to the Forest and the Ocean of a larger world:—

I like very much the society of woodmen. . . . I don't know any men who are so complete masters of their business and of the secluded but delicious world in which they live. They are healthy, their language is picturesque; they live in the air and Nature whispers to them many of her secrets. A Forest is like the Ocean, monotonous only to the ignorant.

The man is here, in these few words, quite as truly as in any of the long Parliamentary speeches:

a man who really loved both Nature and the things of the mind, as he really loved England, but who could never be quite simple and natural in his language about any of them; a Jew, an exotic, a man of genius, whose imagination was not to be confined within any park palings, whether of Hughenden or of the House of Commons.

IV

THE POLITICAL LIFE OF DISRAELI, 1855-1868*

FEW people will find this volume † as interesting as its predecessor. Its defect, to put it plainly, is that there is nothing great in it. There is, indeed, always Disraeli's miraculous fertility of cleverness of all sorts, and that may itself be considered a kind of greatness. But it has no longer anything really great to do. In the second volume we had the magnificent daring of the single-handed assault upon Peel and the invective which was its weapon, a swordlike use of the tongue which, though it could not produce a series of classics like Cicero's Philippics, far surpassed Cicero in the difficulties it had to overcome and the success with which it overcame them. That was greatness of one kind. In the third volume we had greatness of another; with courage again perhaps as its most striking ingredient, but this time moral courage—we had the publication of "Tancred" in 1847 and of

* *Times* Literary Supplement, May, 11, 1916.

† "The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield," by George Earle Buckle, in succession to W. F. Monypenny. Volume IV., 1855–1868. (Murray. 12*s*. net.)

"The Life of Lord George Bentinck" in 1851. The whole of the one and the most remarkable chapter in the other were devoted to the proud vindication of the glories of the Jewish race. And they came from a man whose ambition was to be Prime Minister of England and who well knew that the principal obstacle in his path was just that fact that he was a Jew. Is there in all the history of English politics a single instance of a venture of faith greater than this, involving, as it did, the risking of a whole career for the sake of convictions outside politics which most men would have felt they were in no way called upon to obtrude upon the public to their own injury?

But in this volume we have neither the courage of the gladiator which won Disraeli his place in politics nor the greater courage which risked it for a higher cause. Here he is throughout in possession of the leadership. There are frequent grumblings, and he is driven more than once to offers of retirement, which may or may not have been sincere. But his seat on his difficult and thankless throne is not in fact seriously challenged. Men might distrust and dislike him, as in fact they did right on till the living apotheosis of 1874. But by this time it was plain to everybody that his genius was absolutely indispensable to his party. The problem now was how to turn a reluctant acquiescence in the fact of his superiority into the perfect confidence, devotion, and union which is the ideal relation of a party to its chief.

It was obviously not an easy one. Nothing could make a Jew who was half mystic and half adventurer the natural leader of Tory squires and parsons. But if they could not feel the relation a natural one, as indeed they never did, the thing was to make them feel it not only unavoidable, which on the whole they did, but also safe, which as yet on the whole they did not. This volume is the record of Disraeli's attempts to perform a task uncongenial to so daring a genius. "Playing for safety" is not an inspiring business at any time; and Disraeli's method of doing it by appearing in the House of Commons as the apostle of non-intervention, of general economy, especially in Naval and Military Estimates, and of a Colonial policy which looked upon colonies as "deadweights," may have been all very well as Parliamentary Opposition to Palmerston, but hardly increases our impressions of the greatness of the man. And the practice which he adopted at this time of attending diocesan conferences and farmers' dinners, where, oddly enough, he chose to deliver some of his profoundest speeches, was probably more successful in giving a momentary interest to those functions than in securing the settled and permanent confidence of clergy or farmers in the strange orator who gave them so much more wit and wisdom than they could understand.

Mr. Buckle, then, has here scarcely had the material for a volume of first-rate interest. Throughout it his hero is merely holding his

fortress. There is another disadvantage. We are far more confined than before to the walls of the House of Commons. And there never was a period when the House of Commons was less inspiring. Disraeli's famous phrase was far more applicable to the rule of Palmerston in the early sixties than to any other Ministry before or since. Palmerston, in manner the frankest of men, was as Prime Minister the very personification of "organized hypocrisy." No one really knew that better than Gladstone and Bright. Yet Gladstone saved him by becoming his Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Bright twice threw Derby and Disraeli out in his favour. Derby himself would take no steps to turn out a Minister who used the Whig flag and a Liberal army to play the Conservative game far more effectively than any Conservative could play it. The result was, of course, a situation in which nothing could occur except small tactical moves based on opportunism. And the consequence of that is that there is less of the original and spontaneous Disraeli in this volume than there was in those which went before or will be in those which succeed it. In his free and irresponsible youth he might say what he liked because, whatever he said, everybody took it for clever nonsense; in his old age of incense and adoration he might say what he liked because, whatever he said, everybody took it for profound wisdom. Even in his early middle age he could enjoy the great escape of "Tancred." But in the sixties the only substi-

tute for an escape which he could enjoy was an hour in the Sheldonian Theatre cracking jokes against Huxley and Colenso among the rural clergy and the Oxford dons. And even on that occasion, profound and amply vindicated by time as was his instinctive distrust of mere intellectualism in religion and mere materialism in science, there is still a taint of the same "playing for safety" in nearly all he said. The speech was not, like "Tancred," a real escape of the free spirit of Disraeli. It was partly a sincere expression of his deeply held faith in that religion of the spirit which was the gift of his race to the world. But it was partly, also, a piece of more or less dishonest electioneering. For no one knew better than Disraeli that there was much more than "provincial arrogance" in Jowett and much more than "glib assurance" in Huxley and Darwin. "Man is a being born to believe." So he truly told his audience, rightly warning them that if men and women were not allowed to believe in Christianity they would believe in something else which philosophers might find even more irrational: a prophecy the fulfilment of which is to be seen in our streets as well as in our books and newspapers. But a cynic might say that the greatest of all proofs that man was born to believe lay in an audience of clergymen accepting Disraeli as the champion of orthodoxy as they understood it in the year 1865.

But this Oxford adventure is only an oasis in a desert of political manœuvring. The book

is given to thirteen years of the House of Commons about ten of which were spent in an Opposition which had often, by Derby's command, to be half-hearted, and the remaining three in office indeed, but not in power. That is the story, and it cannot be a very exciting one. Mr. Buckle does all that can be done for it by a good selection and arrangement of his materials and by a lucid and pleasant style. More, perhaps, could have been made of it if he had given less space to the chronicling of the details of debates and political intrigues and more to a large discussion, looking before and after, of the really vital issues in home, Imperial, and foreign affairs which lay concealed under these Parliamentary squabbles and for the most part quite unperceived by the squabblers. To that accusation no English politician stands generally less open than Disraeli. More, as we have seen, than any Englishman he had always in mind that Parliament was only a part of England, England of Europe, Europe of the world. And the present never occupied him so entirely as to make him forget that it came out of the past and was leading to the future. There is an interesting letter, quoted here, written to Disraeli by his Saxon friend Vitythum, in which he says that after living fourteen years in England he was " struck by the fact that you appeared the only man in England working for posterity. Your genius bore to my eyes always the historical stamp, and I never listened to a speech of yours without thinking, this word, this sentence, will be remembered a hundred years hence." It is

the language of friendship, even of flattery; but at least it does not seem absurd, as it would now if we found it in a letter to Palmerston or Gladstone. The melancholy truth, however, is that even this greatest of Disraeli's gifts suffered some eclipse at this period of his life. What were the great questions that came up in its course? The only domestic problem of importance was that of Reform, Disraeli's daring solution of which is the most striking event recorded in this volume. But it was not home affairs, but India and America, Italy and Prussia, that provided the real interest of the time. How did Disraeli's mind respond to these problems?

We have always in fairness to remember that he was not altogether a free man, for the simple reason that he had to follow Derby and to oppose Palmerston. That must be borne in mind, and is no doubt the key to many speeches that add nothing to his reputation. But it cannot alter the fact that he shows scarcely a sign of prophetic sympathy with Italy (even refusing to meet Garibaldi), and scarcely a sign of prophetic distrust of Prussia. Like his correspondent King Leopold, he utterly misread the real danger to England and to Europe. He was frightened at the wholly imaginary menace of a unity of the Latin races under France, and was blind to the other, so imminent, and, as it now seems to us, so certain, of a unity of the Germans under Prussia. He was even mad enough in 1863 to imagine Prussia in danger of partition, and to say

privately in 1864 that she was "a country without any bottom and could not maintain a real war for six months." In Parliament, in spite of some misgivings on the part of some of his colleagues, he took the line of peace and non-interference on behalf of Denmark, imagining that to go to war with Germany was to "make France the mistress of Europe." No doubt most other statesmen were equally blind; but then it is precisely the glory of Disraeli that he invites a higher standard of judgment. In this case he saw rather less than the others, and appears to have been largely influenced by the party situation and the fear of helping Palmerston into a successful war of which he said the Whigs would get all the credit.

It is pleasanter to turn away from Europe, for the farther a scene lay from the House of Commons the more clearly it was seen by the true Disraeli. Even in this rather drab and dreary period of his life Disraeli was occasionally inspired when his eyes crossed the seas. Did any one except Burke ever make such a speech on the hustings as that Disraeli made in 1859, the year when, as Mr. Buckle aptly notes, both England and Prussia were rejoicing over the birth of the boy who was to be William II.? Which of the politicians of those days at all understood what he told them in that speech, that, whatever might be the fate of Europe, England would still have "an illustrious future"? England, he said, is no "mere Power of the Old World. Her geographical position, her laws, her language,

and religion connect her as much with the New World as with the Old." So he threw all his weight into keeping the peace with the United States in the crisis of 1862, and not only was it he and his colleagues who against the Radicals created the Dominion of Canada, but he went farther: he insisted that, though no longer bound to us by any legal tie, even the United States were still our Colonies and might still be expected to be our natural allies.

In this field (though there were private and momentary stupidities like that of talking of Colonies as " deadweights ") we do get glimpses of the great Disraeli. But it is difficult not to suspect that his attitude, in this as in other matters, was partly inspired by a motive to which Mr. Buckle draws no attention. Is it merely a coincidence that on all these questions —that of Italy, that of Denmark and Schleswig, that of the difficulty with the United States— Disraeli's policy was the policy of the Court? Like everything else with Disraeli, his attitude towards the Queen was decided by a compound of self-interest and imagination. From the first he set himself to win the favour of the Court. That there was no element of sycophancy or insincerity in his way of doing it no one will assert who has read his letters to the Queen. The one which in this volume compares the Prince Consort to Sir Philip Sidney was neither the first nor the last of its kind. No doubt he felt that the Court alone could give him the element of social strength, the lack of which was

one of his principal difficulties. But to think that this was all is the easy blunder of commonplace cynics who will never understand Disraeli. To him the woman who sat on the throne of the Plantagenets was necessarily a great deal more than she was to men whose vision was limited to the House, the clubs, and the constituencies. The Crown touched his imagination and he believed it had a future as well as a past. And he may well have been partly influenced, even in his blunders about Italy and Prussia, by a deliberate desire to increase the weight of the Sovereign in the shaping of English policy.

At any rate there is no doubt that there was political wisdom as well as imagination in his prescient suggestions about the right position of the Sovereign of the Indian Empire. Who but he was capable of saying in 1857, "You can only act upon the opinion of Eastern nations through their imagination"? And who but he understood that, for that reason, you must draw much nearer the visible relations between the peoples of India and "their real Ruler and Sovereign Queen Victoria"? The speech in which these words occur is by far the greatest in this volume. Almost every word Disraeli uttered in it has since received the visible seal and sanction of the event. It is difficult to overestimate the rich harvest which the British Empire is at this moment reaping from the policy of the Derby Government after the Mutiny, in which the sympathy, the ideas, and the imagination came, of course, from Disraeli,

while the simple and noble language of the great Proclamation which inaugurated the new era was, it seems, the contribution of the scholarly Derby. From that day the great vision of Burke began to be accomplished. From that day we have seen ourselves, and on the whole been seen by the natives of India, to be in India not as conquerors but, in Disraeli's words, as protectors " of the laws and customs, the property and religion " of the princes and peoples of that vast country. Twenty years later Disraeli put the visible crown to his work when under his auspices Queen Victoria became Empress of India. And that the new relation has been no nominal or merely ceremonial change has been proved by the great success of the present Emperor's visit to India, and still more by India's eager and generous anticipation of the Emperor's call to service when the day of danger came in August, 1914.

It will seem strange to people of a certain kind that it should have been possible to write so much about this volume without so far saying a word of the Reform Act of 1867. No doubt, looked at through Parliamentary and electioneering spectacles, that was the great event of the time. But the truth is that in these tremendous days, when the future of Europe and the world is being decided on land and sea, it is still possible to regard the birth of Italy and of Prussia, the new birth of the United States, of Canada, and of India as great events, whereas the matter of creating a few thousands, or a few scores of

thousands, of new voters seems an affair of very parochial importance. The crucial struggle about Reform was decided in 1832. It was impossible to go so far without ultimately going further. So the Reform Bill of 1867 is a secondary event in more senses than that of the order of time. No doubt the admission of the wage-earner to a great, if not at once the greatest, share in political power marks an important stage in our constitutional development. But it was one which had long been foreseen by all men of political intelligence. And by Disraeli it had been welcomed in advance. His personal conviction had always been in favour of going behind and through the middle classes of 1832 and calling the nation as a whole to a share in the national counsels. Still, few will feel that the word Reform is one of the safest to inscribe on the banner of his fame. His attitude towards it, like that of everybody else except Bright, lacked sincerity and consistency. And, though his passage of the Bill of 1867 was striking proof of the ascendancy he had obtained over his party, it may be doubted whether it redounds very greatly to the credit either of his intellect or of his character.

The death of Palmerston made it certain that the question of Reform would speedily come up for settlement. What ought a Conservative leader to have done? Surely he ought to have recognized that on the one hand it was necessary to make some advance, while on the other hand it was desirable not to go too fast and

to prevent the country being committed to the control of an electorate based on mere numbers. Both of these were essential Conservative principles and the second was frequently emphasized by Disraeli. What happened? He might probably have secured both, and he did secure neither. Why? Because, like the Liberals in 1858, he cared much less about settling the question than about defeating his opponents. If he had let the Russell-Gladstone Bill pass, that moderate measure might have adjourned further controversy for years. But the temptation to a party victory followed by office was too great, and he took up, in alliance with Lowe and the Adullamites, an attitude of more or less uncompromising resistance to the Bill and even to Reform itself. The result was that the Conservatives gained office while the Radicals gained power. Disraeli in office had to go a great deal farther to satisfy Bright than Bright's own friends had been willing to go. The fact is that, being as Mr. Buckle says "always an opportunist on Reform," Disraeli had neither thought out a scheme nor arranged for Parliamentary support when he presented his improvised Bill which never had or deserved to have a real majority in its favour and was transformed into a thoroughly Radical measure in the course of its progress through the House of Commons. The party accepted the daring manœuvre in the hope of "dishing the Whigs"; and certainly the history of the next thirty years vindicated Disraeli's confidence in the national

spirit of the working man. But the mere counting of heads is not statesmanship, and the Act of 1867 did nothing to solve the fundamental problem of democracy, which is how to give the wage-earning classes a great share, perhaps it should be the greatest, in political power without giving them the whole.

Here, as elsewhere, perhaps, Mr. Buckle is too inclined to hold a brief for his hero, who hardly cuts a very heroic or even a very honourable figure as he introduces into the Constitution Bright's principle of numbers, in which neither he nor his party believed. But hero-worship is a venial sin in a biographer. And Mr. Buckle commits it so plausibly and pleasantly that he will win an easy indulgence from nearly all his readers. They will warmly congratulate him on the steady progress he is making in his great task. He is quickening his pace as he advances, and the goal begins almost to be in sight. The last volume covered nine years. This covers thirteen. In 1868 Disraeli had only thirteen more years to live ; so perhaps the next volume may complete the picture. If so, will Mr. Buckle remember, before he lays down his pen, to give us more, much more, than he has yet given of Disraeli's private habits, tastes, and characteristics ? We get in this volume a few meagre glimpses of these small things that tell one more than speeches of what the inner and essential Disraeli was. We see him offering prawns, " the rosy-coloured tribute of Torbay," to Bishop Wilberforce ; we see him complaining

of official ink and paper, which give his writing "a cheesemongerish look"; we see him mocking, as Mr. Gladstone could never have mocked, at the bald heads and general hideousness of the members of a Statistical Congress; we see him turning his back on the cheering Carlton, which wanted him to be its guest at supper, hurrying home to Mrs. Disraeli, who had "got him a raised pie from Fortnum and Mason's and a bottle of champagne," and crying to her as he finished his supper, "Why, my dear, you are more like a mistress than a wife!" But these are trifles, however significant, and there are only a very few of them. Nor is any of them so amusing as many stories about Disraeli which Mr. Buckle might easily have heard and recorded. Not so amusing, perhaps, as one probably unknown to him, which is told by a lady still living to whom Lady Beaconsfield once said: "Ah, people may say what they like about the courage of public men. All I know is I always have to pull the strings of Dizzy's shower-bath!" Even absurdities of this kind enliven biography and occasionally illuminate it. Let Mr. Buckle not forget in his last volume that he is writing the life of one who was not only a great statesman and a great political writer, but also one of the most original, curious, interesting, and interested human beings who ever walked through the pageant of life.

V

THE POLITICAL LIFE OF DISRAELI, 1868–1881 *

MR. BUCKLE has reached the end of his long journey.† He will receive the congratulations of everybody who cares about English political history, and especially of that great majority of them, including nearly all except the youngest, who were readers of *The Times* during his editorship. He was even more modest and self-effacing as an editor than he is as a biographer. Comparatively few of those who every day read the paper which he edited were so much as aware of his name, which, indeed, was hardly known outside the small world of those who write. But the name of a biographer cannot be concealed; least of all that of the biographer of a man like Disraeli. And the biographer reveals the editor, and wins for him the long-deferred, one may even say scrupulously avoided, gratitude of those who did not know to whose wisdom and judgment and high sense of responsibility they chiefly owed so much which they valued in

* *Times* Literary Supplement, June 17, 1920.

† "The Life of Benjamin Disraeli," by George Earle Buckle, in succession to W. F. Monypenny. Volumes V. and VI. (Murray. 18*s*. net each.)

the great newspaper of which he was for so many years the guiding and directing head.

It was a wise decision of the biographer to give us his last two volumes together. The interest of the book has certainly suffered by the long intervals between the appearance of the earlier volumes. The mass of material was so great that delays and divisions were perhaps inevitable. But it is good to have no more of them. The last phase of Disraeli is given, as it should be, as a single act, though in two, or perhaps three, scenes. The first act of the drama is the brilliant boy, whose genius was almost hidden under social, literary, and political fopperies. The second is the David who slew Goliath. The third is the Chief of the Staff, in an army whose officers despised him as an outsider and distrusted him as a genius, under a commander-in-chief who with the reputation of a Rupert was in fact too lazy to keep the army moving and too cautious ever to risk a battle. In the fourth he has succeeded to the chief command, has to fight on ground chosen by the new generalissimo of the enemy, and is defeated. The fifth, given in these two last volumes, is the duel, thirteen years long, with that arch enemy of whom he is first the rival, then the conqueror, and finally the victim. The political history of England between 1868 and 1881 is that of the struggle between Disraeli and Gladstone.

No two men were ever more unlike. The points of contrast between them would take a volume to enumerate; the things they had in

common were just three. Each was a politician, an author, and an affectionate husband. But even here their ways of being these things were so opposite that they were scarcely ever more unlike than when they met on the same ground. The Olympian who pooh-poohed the Bulgarian atrocities as "coffee-house babble" was scarcely more remote from the fervent orator who made Mid-Lothian ring with them than the writer of Mr. Gladstone's innumerable magazine articles from the author of "Coningsby" or "Sybil," or the husband of Mrs. Gladstone from the husband of Lady Beaconsfield. Probably Lady Beaconsfield, or after her death, Lady Bradford, received more of the flattering homages of love in a fortnight than Mrs. Gladstone received in all her life. There are many chapters in Disraeli's novels which contain more ideas than are to be found in all the multifarious publications of Mr. Gladstone. To emphasize the contrast is, of course, to force an open door. But not so, perhaps, to ask what it was that lay at the root of it. The two men were sometimes thought of as just two party leaders like Derby and Russell, or even Pitt and Fox, who took different views of public questions and had different ways of managing Parliament and the country. But the cleavage really goes much deeper. It is that which divides the man of imagination from the practical man, the artist from the moralist, the man who is thinking in perfect freedom, furnishing his motives and materials out of his own sources, from the man who is the slave of his

education and his world, whose thoughts are always occasioned and directed by some impulsion from without; in a word, that which divides genius from talent however marvellous, or, if you like it better, the genius of ideas from the genius of administration. Akin to this is the contrast between the universal way of looking at things natural to Disraeli and occasionally so disconcerting to his political supporters, and Gladstone's entirely local, national, and traditional habit of mind, always through all changes narrowly English, and English of a particular class and type, the type formed by the Anglican Church, the public schools and the universities, and developed by practical activities, public or private. No doubt the ordinary man of that type does not write books or pamphlets about Homer, or Vaticanism, or Bishop Butler, or Home Rule. But all he would need for doing so is more brains. All those subjects belong to his world and are in the line of his development. But "the two nations" of "Sybil," the "Sidonian" politics of "Coningsby," the "Asian Mystery" of "Tancred" and "Lord George Bentinck" are, or were when Disraeli wrote of them, all quite out of his reach and ken.

These are the two men whose rivalry divided England during the thirteen years with which these volumes deal. No such two had filled the air of Parliament with greatness since the days of Pitt and Fox; perhaps none such will be seen there again. It is a glorious theme for a biographer. We have had it from the side of

Gladstone. Now we have it from that of Disraeli. Mr. Buckle, of course, makes no pretence of being a Lord Morley. He is neither a great statesman, nor a great student, nor a great critic of life and letters, and he seldom or never drops in passing those pregnant general reflections, often plainly born of personal experiences, which are the salt of Lord Morley's book and give the reader a sense of his presence on almost every page. Mr. Buckle keeps in the main to the part of chronicler; and when he comments he confines himself very closely to the defence of his hero and the business in hand, seldom travelling into the history or philosophy of politics at large. Fate has, in truth, sorted rather strangely the two statesmen and their biographers. The traditional, orthodox, and conventional Englishman and Anglican has been handed over to the cosmopolitan philosopher, while the typical product of Winchester and Oxford deals with the man who was always an alien and a mystery in the land he lived to rule. When one reads Lord Morley one feels that, in discussing Gladstone's policy or speeches, he has in his mind, in the background, if not on the surface, Aristotle or Demosthenes or Burke, the problems and lessons of history, Greek, Roman, and French, as well as English. Mr. Buckle seldom takes us, even by suggestion, outside the circumstances and considerations which immediately influenced those who supported or opposed his hero's actions. The data he deals with are the facts and arguments as they

were at the time; the Court before which he tries them is that of the results as we can now see them. The consequence is that Gladstone is seen in the light of the universal rather more than he deserves, and Disraeli rather less.

But it must not be supposed that Mr. Buckle's modest abstentions from general principles make him a mere hero-worshipper or partisan. Of this his philosophic rival is certainly more guilty than he. The universal has its dangers. It fixes the eyes on general principles, which in Mr. Gladstone's case were certainly lofty and pure, and ignores the pressure of passing occasions and interests, which was as powerful with him as with other men and no more ennobling. Consequently it is a little unconscious of such things as the Jesuitical casuistry which defended the Collier and Ewelme appointments and a little unaware that other motives beside the ostensible ones had their influence in promoting the Bulgarian agitation and the conversion to Home Rule. Mr. Buckle's narrower vision often sees clearer. No doubt his path is easier Disraeli himself made no pretence of being in politics solely for the service of God. But without rising to that height he might have taken, and Gladstone did take, a much higher view of his responsibilities than Mr. Buckle shows him actually taking. There is, for instance, the matter of Church appointments. It is amusing to find Disraeli writing in 1875 to Lord Salisbury, who was supposed to represent "High Church" in the Cabinet: "Can you suggest a good

High Church dean who is not a damned fool, and won't make himself ridiculous?" and to find Lord Salisbury replying, "I have put down all that I know about possible High Church deans—'who are not damned fools'—a formidable restriction!" But however entertaining and however well justified this correspondence may be, it hardly suggests the ideal spirit in which Church appointments should be approached. Mr. Buckle deserves credit for making no secret of it, nor of the very electioneering grounds on which some ecclesiastical dignitaries, including Bishops, were actually appointed, and more, but for the Queen, would have been, in preparation for the Dissolution of 1868.

On the whole, then, everybody who is not an extreme partisan will recognise the honesty, the lucidity and ability with which Mr. Buckle has stated his case. A case it is, of course. He writes as frankly from the one point of view as Lord Morley from the other. Perhaps the day of final judgment is not yet; and neither could have done what neither has much attempted. Meanwhile we have here again one of the most exciting of Parliamentary stories told from inside with fullness and authority. We are present at every stage of the great duel; we stand by the side of one of the two champions and are witnesses of his triumphs and defeats, and, more than that, auditors and almost partakers of all his secret hopes and fears. And there is a still greater thing. The duel was no

mere personal struggle. It "shook realms and nations in its jar," as truly as that which death was just bringing to a close when the older of these later protagonists was being born. The life of England was bound up in it. The destiny even of Europe seemed sometimes to hang on it. It is no small thing to be, as it were, made members of the Cabinet which decided such issues. It is scarcely too much to say that that is what Mr. Buckle has been enabled to make us. The kindness of his Majesty the King has allowed him to publish a very large number of the letters which passed almost daily between Disraeli and Queen Victoria. To the subsequent wrath of Gladstone when he discovered it, Disraeli was in the habit of giving the Queen detailed accounts of Cabinets and of the various opinions of Ministers, a practice in which he was clearly within his rights, for Ministers are individually and not merely collectively the servants and advisers of the Sovereign, and the Sovereign cannot know too much about them. In any case we are now the gainers by it. We see policy being shaped day by day, and those who helped the shaping and those who hindered. Of the Queen's letters what is to be said is that nothing has previously been published which gives anything like so vivid a picture of her as she was at this time; a somewhat strange mixture of passion and common sense, self-will and sense of duty, shrewdness and limited vision; with, above all, three great qualities possessed without measure or limit or mixture of alloy; truthful-

ness, courage, and love of England. To these letters are added those of Derby, Salisbury, and other Ministers. The result is that in this book we hear the words and read the letters not only of the Ministers, but of Bismarck, Gortschakoff, Schouvaloff, and the rest as soon as they were said or written, and are told at once what the Queen and her Ministers thought of them.

This is the greatest thing in the book, but it is not the newest. That is the curious correspondence with Lady Bradford and Lady Chesterfield. Till now scarcely any one has been allowed to see these letters; even Mr. Monypenny is said to have been refused a sight of them when he began this Life. Happily, Mr. Buckle has been more fortunate, and all his readers will be full of gratitude to the late Commander Bridgeman and the other owners of the letters for their generosity in allowing this singular, but characteristic, episode of Disraeli's old age to be made public. No one who knows anything of the facts doubts the depth and sincerity of his love for his wife. To the end his regret for her, his loneliness without her, is a frequent theme of his letters. The very love letters with which he embarrassed Lady Bradford—1100 of them in eight years—probably even the letter in which he asked her widowed sister to become his wife, were written on paper which recalled his loss of Lady Beaconsfield by the thickest of black edges. He was once looking with Lord Redesdale at the preparations for an official banquet which he had to give,

" when all of a sudden," says Lord Redesdale, he turned round, his eyes were dim and his voice husky, as he said, " Ah, my dear fellow, you are happy, you have a wife." He was a born actor; and this, like the language of Oriental devotion which he addressed to the Queen, like his mystical raptures about race and destiny and religion and England, was no doubt, in one sense, acting. That is to say, it was an imaginative embodiment of the truth. In this, as in everything else, as unlike as possible to the typical English gentleman of whom it was his fate and his pride to be the political leader, he could not rest till he had given his thoughts and feelings a visible shape, an external life of expression, in which he—and others—could see, enjoy, and admire them. And, of course, the artist in him naturally became what a great writer said it was an artist's function to be—" a magnifying mirror of the truth." But, whatever dullards might think, it was the truth, not a lie, whether Lady Beaconsfield or Lady Bradford, England or Queen Victoria, were the picture in the mirror. No doubt Disraeli, who was a man of ideas rather than of principles, would occasionally make untrue statements which Gladstone, the man of principles rather than of ideas, would not have made. This book shows him doing so once or twice, as on the occasion of his first visit to Hatfield and in the amusing story of a compliment he paid to Mr. Mallock, who had then just published " The New Republic." A lady anxious to capture a

clever recruit for the party asked Disraeli to read his book and send some complimentary message. He seldom read new books, and declined that part of the request. But he was quite equal to producing the compliment without reading the book. He gave the lady a note saying he was going to Hughenden, and only wished it could be "peopled with the bright creations of Mr. Mallock's fancy"! But few of us altogether escape these polite insincerities even without the excuse of a State or a party to serve by them. And perhaps Gladstone's unconscious untruths, if the more innocent, were the more dangerous. Disraeli might have done the Ewelme job, and might have defended it. But he would have been well aware of what he was doing and defending. Gladstone, with all his exalted and sincere sense of truth and duty, was occasionally afflicted with the kind of lie which Plato thought the worst of all—the lie which the liar is unaware of because it is inside the soul.

However, there is no question of any kind of lying in these love letters. They involve no disloyalty to Lady Beaconsfield and no deceit of Lady Bradford. Nothing in Disraeli seems quite natural to English eyes. But in reality nothing was more natural to him, being what he was, old and lonely, a man who had all his life been dependent on some woman for sympathy, admiration, and affection, than that he should turn, within a few months of his wife's death, for inspiration, as he sincerely called it, to these two great ladies who recalled his youth while

they gilded, charmed, and consoled his old age. The intimacy grew very rapidly. Before he had been a widower six months Lady Chesterfield was already " Dearest Lady Ches.," and he was her " most affectionate D." But though he proposed to Lady Chesterfield, it was Lady Bradford, who soon became " Selina," with whom the intimacy was closest. Indeed, he told her once that he loved her sister but was in love with her ; and that there was all the difference between the two. It was to her, who did not like his novels, as he complained, that the master of irony cryptically dedicated his last book by giving it the name of " Endymion," the human lover of the Moon-Goddess Selene. She naturally resented some of his extravagances, and the lovers' quarrels between the elderly statesman and a lady who was already a grandmother are sometimes—entirely by his fault—a little ridiculous. His artistry was not always in perfect taste : one can never enough remember that he was of a race among whose many fine qualities good taste is scarcely ever included. But behind all this there was real sincerity : it is not too much to say that there was a true cry of the heart. He loved Lady Bradford for the right reason : because she was what she was and because he was himself. He knew that her feelings to him were not the same as his to her ; and admits that it was " natural and reasonable " that this should be so. But, as he adds, " unfortunately for me my imagination did not desert me with my youth." He was not a man

of miscellaneous friendships. He hated clubs and cared little for the society of men.

I require perfect solitude or perfect sympathy. My present life gives me neither of these ineffable blessings. It may be brilliant but it is too fragmentary. It is not a complete existence. It gives me neither the highest development of the intellect or the heart: neither Poetry nor Love.

So he wrote to her in 1874: and during the seven years he still had to live she gave him always more and more of the "perfect sympathy" which he craved. She and Lord Bradford gradually forgot his extravagances in their admiration for his genius, in their pity for his loneliness, and, no doubt, in their natural pride in the friendship of a man on whom the eyes of all Europe were fixed. And of course Lady Bradford felt something more. Her letters to him are destroyed. Some of them, as is evident from his replies, complained of his embarrassing attentions. But others, as may be seen in his letter of July 4, 1875, contained words of affection for which he would have been unreasonable indeed if he had not been willing, as he says, "to bless the being who wrote them."

No review can hope even to touch on a hundredth part of the topics and events discussed in the thirteen hundred large pages of these two volumes. Disraeli was a many-sided man, and the Premiership is a many-sided office. Mr. Buckle's story is one of public

life and private: of the crowded parties of London and the beechen solitudes of Hughenden: of a writer of novels and a reader of the classics: of the Queen and Lady Bradford: of the enemy and the friend of Lord Salisbury: of the House of Commons and the House of Lords: of religion as a world-shaping force, his understanding of which makes Disraeli pre-eminent among the writers of his day, and of religious parties in the Church of England, his ignorance of which was one of the chief causes of his downfall: of a policy in Ireland of which he resisted the optimistic beginnings and foresaw the disastrous end: of Abyssinia and Afghanistan, India and South Africa, the Suez Canal and Cyprus, the Franco-Prussian War and the Russo-Turkish War, the Treaty of San Stefano and the Treaty of Berlin. These are only a fraction of the whole. Much of the book, for instance, is occupied with Home affairs. Lord Derby's cowardly refusal of office in 1855 prevented the author of "Sybil" from attaining power till he was old and almost constantly ill. Nothing in this book will be newer to the public than the heroic courage with which the spirit of Disraeli steeled itself to manage his Sovereign and his colleagues, in fact, to rule England and guide Europe, while his body, often racked with pain, seemed as if it would refuse its office altogether. But Mr. Buckle has no difficulty in showing that, even at that eleventh hour and in the midst of foreign distractions, Disraeli managed to achieve work which makes his

record as a social reformer the very reverse of a blank. His most discussed piece of home legislation, the Public Worship Regulation Act, was indeed a complete failure. But his support of it was not his own choice; it was almost forced upon him by the Queen, who showed herself as unwise in that matter as she showed herself wise, much wiser and more public-spirited than Disraeli, in the matter of great Church appointments. But Disraeli's position in these things was very much that of a foreigner, and no foreigner has ever felt anything but contempt for the English Ritualists. If a Catholic, he prefers the real thing to the "mass in masquerade"; if a Protestant, he detests traitors in the camp of the greatest of all the Churches which defy Rome. This, however, was a side issue, in which Disraeli's ignorance and the Queen's prejudices betrayed them to failure. In real social legislation there was no failure, but the contrary. The crying needs of the "condition of the people" were at once taken in hand by Disraeli's Ministry. Measures dealing with housing and Friendly Societies, with the law of "conspiracy" in trade disputes, with the hours of factory labour, with the grievances of seamen and agricultural tenants, soon became law. Lord Morley and Liberals generally have affected to scoff at Disraeli's work in this field. They need no answer but the words of a Labour member of Parliament spoken to his constituents in 1879: "The Conservative Party have done more for the

working classes in five years than the Liberals have in fifty."

But no one will pretend that Disraeli's place in political history will be decided by the merits or demerits of his social legislation. The Acts of Parliament which he passed were only the visible effects of a much larger achievement. So far as his ultimate rank as a statesman is to be fixed by anything occurring in the field of home politics, it is his " education " of his party that must fix it. It is, no doubt, partly due to Canning and Peel, but it is far more due to Disraeli than to both of them together, that we have had in England for the last fifty years a Conservative Party which is progressive and national and not a mere aristocratic " fronde," reactionary, blind, and stupid, such as those of which the continent of Europe has seen too much. The political situation since the war is too controversial and, indeed, uncertain to be discussed. But it is the simple fact that ever since Disraeli gave the vote to the mass of the people Conservative candidates, convinced and avowed supporters of Throne and Church and Empire, have again and again been chosen as the representatives of great popular constituencies, and especially of London, at almost every General Election. And the contrast between this experience and what has commonly happened in Paris and Berlin, Rome and Madrid, is the measure of the genius of Disraeli, even when all allowance has been made for the help he derived from the practical instinct of the English race.

But no; the words are scarcely written before one is forced to take them back. The genius of Disraeli was a world-genius, and is not to be measured by anything achieved within the boundaries of a small island. Lord Salisbury well said of him that "zeal for the greatness of England was the passion of his life." But England, in his eyes, was always something much larger than the forty counties of the geography books. He believed in race, and for him England was the English race all over the world. He believed in history, and in his mind England was always much more than the Sovereign or people or achievement of the hour; it was the England of Elizabeth and Chatham, of the Heights of Abraham and the field of Waterloo. He believed in ideas, and saw in England the visible embodiment on a world-wide scale of the greatest and most hopeful of all political ideas, for which he found or coined his famous Roman phrase, "Imperium et Libertas." So, naturally enough, and indeed inevitably, it will not be with his Housing or Trades Union legislation, no, nor even with the party he transformed and inspired, that history will be occupied when the day comes for the final estimate of his work and influence. It will rather have to contrast the negligible position to which England had sunk among the Powers of Europe between 1864 and 1874 and in part sank again between 1880 and 1885, with the commanding position to which Disraeli at once restored her when he for the first time in his

life could speak in her name with no fear of contradiction, as the master of an assured Parliamentary majority and the Minister of an admiring and even affectionate Sovereign. It will have to consider whether some large part of the credit for the courage, will, and endurance which enabled England to play the leading part in the deliverance of the world in 1914–1918 may not be due to the great man who, whatever his errors in detail, had taught her forty years earlier not to be afraid of her own greatness, and never to dream that the destinies of Europe could possibly be a matter of indifference to the descendants of the men who had fought Philip II. and Louis XIV. and Napoleon. If we have never again, not even in 1880–1885, cut the sorry figure which we cut in 1864 and in 1870, is it not in part because 1878 and Disraeli had proved such cowardice to be unnecessary and had rendered any return to it impossible? His death did not remove his influence. Some of the details of his policy were abandoned or modified, but that does not alter the fact that he created a tradition. He trained Lord Salisbury in foreign affairs, and Lord Salisbury trained Lord Lansdowne who made the Entente with France and Mr. Balfour who created the Committee of Imperial Defence. And Mr. Asquith and Lord Grey accepted and completed their work. That meant that we should never again, at least as regards Western Europe, be mere impotent spectators of the *fait accompli* as we had been in 1864 and 1870. It meant that we had accepted

the doctrine which Disraeli had laid down as early as 1848 when warning Parliament about Prussian ambitions :

> I never can believe that the peace of Europe is to be maintained by hiding our heads in the sand and comforting ourselves with the conviction that nobody will find us out.

That doctrine, Disraeli always maintained, does not mean war. It means peace. The last volume of this Life is, of course, largely occupied with the Treaty of Berlin and the events which led to it. Mr. Buckle tells the story in great detail from behind the scenes, where the Queen was always passionately urging forward and Lord Derby always cautiously hanging back; where Lord Salisbury was gradually changing from the suspicious and suspected critic of his chief to the trusted colleague, ally, and friend; where Petersburgh and Constantinople and Berlin were slowly learning that " the old Jew " was a man who meant business and could not be bluffed. A discussion of the details of Beaconsfield's policy during the Russo-Turkish war and at the Congress would be impossible here. And it is quite unnecessary. But two things emerge with great clearness. One is personal. It is Disraeli's definiteness of purpose and strength of will. Bismarck said of him at Berlin: " It was easy to transact business with him; in a quarter of an hour you knew exactly how you stood with him; the limits to which he was prepared to go were

clearly defined and a rapid summary soon precised matters." Already, in 1875, when Bismarck was plotting an attack on France, Disraeli had taught him that he had now to deal in England with people who could make up their minds and were not afraid, as Disraeli was always telling Derby, to say "Bo to a goose." So when the Russo-Turkish crisis came Disraeli at once made up his mind how much of what he desired was possible; and through the long struggle in the Cabinet and afterwards in the negotiations would neither be pushed further than he meant to go by the Queen, nor frightened out of what he meant to have by Lord Derby. The majority of the Cabinet often wanted him to take less, the Queen again and again threatened abdication if she did not get more, but Disraeli stood firm, and the policy he carried out at Berlin was, in substance, the policy he laid down from the first. Its main points were that Russia should neither occupy Constantinople nor destroy Turkey; and that whatever changes were made should be made by Europe as a whole and with a full recognition of the British claim to a special voice in what might so vitally affect our position in India. His resolute will controlled the Queen, drove out Derby, converted Salisbury, defied Gortschakoff, and dominated Bismarck. He was never afraid to run risks; saw clearly, and from the first, against Lord Salisbury that you could not resist Russia unless you were plainly prepared for war if necessary and even for the disagreeable alliance with Turkey.

But he never believed in war. He was sure, and the Crimean precedent supports him, as well as the improved situation directly Derby went, that it was drifting and giving the appearance of not meaning business, that was likely to lead to war. At the worst he compelled his Cabinet to submit under threat of resignation, as he made the Berlin Congress submit by ordering his special train and taking care that Bismarck knew he had done so.

The other thing which emerges from Mr. Buckle's story is that the first object of his policy was one which has been little mentioned, though it proved all-important for the future history of Europe. The details of the Treaty have been much discussed, and often very unfairly. Disraeli certainly did not care as much as he ought to have cared about the sufferings of the Christian subjects of Turkey. But as for those of Asia it was Gladstone, as Mr. Buckle shows, who deprived them of the partial protection which Disraeli had given them. And it is at least very doubtful whether those of Europe would have gained by the making of the Balkan Peninsula practically a Russian province. Certainly, Serbia, Greece, and Rumania (and ultimately all the Allies of 1914) have to thank Disraeli for preventing the creation of a big Bulgaria extending to the Ægean Sea and including many thousands of Serbs and Greeks. But the real object of Disraeli's policy as sketched beforehand, and claimed by him in retrospect, was nothing merely Balkan, nothing even confined

to the relations between England and Russia and Turkey. It was a European object. When the Eastern question was reopened in 1875, the three military Powers, Russia, Austria, and Germany, assumed to themselves the right to dictate the policy of Europe. They evidently looked upon France as broken and England as negligible. This was the heritage of Gladstone and Granville. Disraeli at once insisted that British interests in these matters were as great as Russian or Austrian, and said that he would not allow them to be ignored. When the three Powers presented their Memorandum of policy, framed without any consultation of France, Italy, or England, he would not follow France and Italy in swallowing the insult. "If we are stiff we shall gain all our points," he wrote to Derby; and they did. The Memorandum was withdrawn. So when Salisbury was on his way to the Constantinople Conference, Disraeli wrote to him a long letter of instructions, in the course of which he says:—

> If Russia is not checked, the Holy Alliance will be revived in aggravated form and force. Germany will have Holland; and France, England, and Belgium will be in a position I trust I shall never live to witness.

This new "Holy Alliance," with all its dangers, he claimed to have prevented. "Our object," he wrote to Drummond Wolff two years and more after the Congress, "was to break up and permanently prevent the Alliance of the three

Empires, and I maintain there never was a general diplomatic result more completely effected." By getting Austria and Germany to assist him in checking Russia he drove a wedge between Central Europe and Russia, the effects of which, as Mr. Buckle says, not all Bismarck's subsequent dexterities could undo. At the same time the free Western Powers had reasserted themselves, and when the militarist danger came to a head in 1914, the rift, begun at Berlin in 1878, had widened, and the three Empires of the 1875 Memorandum were divided into two hostile camps. Disraeli's biographer may fairly claim that the sane imperialism of 1878 had its share in promoting the victory of free institutions in the great struggle which ended exactly fifty years later.

These are great topics. But, after all, for the biographer of Disraeli the greatest is Disraeli himself. It is the man himself, what he was more than anything that he did, which will provide three-quarters of the readers of this book. He is always his biographer's subject, whatever others, whether men or affairs, give their name to the page. A reviewer cannot pretend to attempt what has taken the biographer six volumes to accomplish. He can only refer the reader who is anxious for a general impression to two summaries, given here, the work of the two biographers. The first, printed at the end of the fifth volume, is Mr. Buckle's estimate of Disraeli as an orator and Parliamentarian. There are few better things of the kind anywhere. It exhibits him, by the testimony of many and

adverse witnesses, as the man who, after overthrowing "the greatest member of Parliament that ever lived," became himself, by patience, by tact, by constant attendance and industry, by wit, irony, invective, eloquence, above all by sheer power of intellect and imagination, the acknowledged master, as well as the pride and delight, of the House of Commons. George Russell, a Whig and a Ritualist, said that the difference between him and others was the difference between genius and talent. Sir William Harcourt wrote that his departure from the House left it a chessboard without the queen, and its game "a petty struggle of pawns." A hostile writer said that no orator had carried further the art of compelling an audience to listen to every word. That, perhaps, gives a hint of the point in which he, like Lord Salisbury after him, was so inferior to Gladstone. His gift was intellect and imagination, which are solitary things, not emotion, and particularly not moral emotion, which insists on sharing and being shared. He could compel his hearers to listen to him; but he himself stood aloof, more perhaps than Mr. Buckle allows, catching opportunities for impromptu illustration or repartee, but seldom or never catching, or allowing himself to be caught by, any of those waves of emotional inspiration which, coming from the hearers, continually renew the speeches of the very greatest orators. That loneliness is also the final impression left by the man. At the end of his last volume Mr. Buckle prints an

extremely interesting and subtle study of Disraeli, which was found among Mr. Monypenny's papers. Mr. Monypenny begins it by saying—

I have sometimes been asked if my book would at last dispel the mystery that surrounds Disraeli; and my answer has invariably been that, unless the mystery remained when I had finished my labours, I should have failed in my task of portraiture: for mystery was of the essence of the man.

That is a profound remark. No better last word could be found for anything, great or small, that is written about Disraeli. It has many meanings, not all of which are to be seized at the first glance. But one of them, and surely the central one, must be that Disraeli was in his chosen field a kind of "man of destiny," and that if he abounded in surprises and inconsistencies, and often seemed to ignore the ordinary motives and moralities of men, it was partly because he was impelled by a force, of which he himself could scarcely have said whether it was within him or without, that indefinable force which must always remain a secret and a mystery, the force to which we give the name of genius. It is a dangerous force. Its product, occupied with himself, and moving he scarcely knows where, is often half charlatan as well as half prophet. We see it in one way in Cromwell, in another in Chatham. It is what we do not find in Pitt or Peel or Gladstone. It is what makes the eternal fascination of Disraeli.

VI

HENRY FOX *

THE title of Lord Ilchester's book † is a misnomer. It will suggest to most people a book of private life and family gossip. But not one-twentieth part of what he has written is occupied with these things. What he has given is far nearer being a political history of England from 1739, when Henry Fox obtained his first office, that of Surveyor of the Works, till his death in 1774. Of course, the history is primarily a biography. But during at least the first five-and-twenty of these thirty-five years Henry Fox played an important part, either as one of the principal actors or as a spectator on whom the principal actors were obliged to keep watchful eyes, in nearly all the changing scenes of Ministerial tragedy and comedy. Once a politician always a politician, is at least as true a saying as once an author always an author. It has been said that a Cabinet Minister has only two happy days in his Cabinet life—the day he takes office and the day he leaves it. But it is the first of the two

* *Times* Literary Supplement, February 25, 1920.

† "Henry Fox, First Lord Holland, His Family and Relations," by the Earl of Ilchester. Two volumes. (Murray. 32*s*. net.)

which he is always trying to recapture. It is quite true that politicians refuse office oftener than the public knows. This book is full of such refusals, which were commoner then than now. For the fifty years which elapsed between Disraeli's Reform Bill and the war the country was alternately governed by the two great parties. Neither Liberal leader nor Conservative could think of forming a Government unless he had a majority in the House of Commons. And as to whether he had one there was no doubt. Nor was there any doubt as to what party any particular politician belonged to; so that if asked by his leader to take office he seldom refused. But in the eighteenth century all these points were doubtful. First, a man belonged to no party in the modern sense of the word. Practically all called themselves Whigs, and shifted from one group of Whigs to another. Then a politician had no leader in the way that Liberals were led by Mr. Gladstone or Conservatives were led by Lord Salisbury. Further, he could not be sure that the Minister who invited him to take office had any majority in the House of Commons. Anybody who became Minister had a majority of a kind because he was the King's Minister. But because he was only the King's Minister, nominated by the King, and, with rare exceptions, not called for by any organised body of opinion either in Parliament or the country, his position was precarious. He never knew whom he could rely on. Consequently men hesitated to embark in Ministerial boats which were to set sail on

such doubtful voyages. The King could send them to sea, but he could not guarantee them against Parliamentary storms. The modern party system, as it worked before the war, could do both.

All this is illustrated by the story here told of the career of Henry Fox. All or nearly all the politicians of those days were in the game for what they could get out of it. But they could never be sure what was the best card to play. Consequently they never knew whether to accept office or to refuse it. They had no real principles to unite them to one man and separate them from another. Nor was a Ministry a homogeneous body between the time when Walpole expelled all rebels and the time when George III.—powerfully assisted by Henry Fox—tried to turn out everybody but his own and Bute's friends. The King failed in his scheme, but his action forced the Whigs to become a party based on principles instead of a collection of intriguing factions; and when in his evil hour Charles Fox returned to the old system and made the Coalition with North, his victory was but momentary. Party—this time the Tory Party—returned a year later with Pitt, and has remained our system ever since. But during the period covered by this book, members of the same Ministry constantly spoke and voted against each other even on important questions. Pitt was Paymaster under Pelham whose policy he constantly attacked. Fox was Paymaster under Pitt in his glorious Ministry of 1757, but openly

scoffed at some of his military expeditions as "breaking windows with guineas," and voted against measures introduced with his approval. Before that, while Secretary at War under Newcastle, he was in open opposition to his official chief. In those days such actions caused no surprise. The Ministers were mere holders of offices, very loosely bound to each other.

This is the world into which this book takes us. The numerous people who are at home and amused in that world will be grateful to Lord Rosebery for having suggested his task to Lord Ilchester and to Lord Ilchester for performing it so well. The book is well written and well arranged. The writer knows his subject and his period and can use his knowledge effectively. He has had access to a great deal of material which has never been used before. Letters and papers at Holland House, at Melbury, at Bowood, and elsewhere have provided a mass of evidence, much of it in Henry Fox's own hand, as to his motives and opinions at various points in his career. Occasionally they enable Lord Ilchester to correct the statements or judgments of previous historians. But on the whole they only fill out the old picture without altering its main lines. Fox remains the best of husbands, the most indulgent of fathers, the most affectionate of brothers, the most indefatigable of friends, the most unpopular, uninspiring, and unattractive of politicians. A man of ability he undoubtedly was, with only one superior, in that respect, among his contemporaries. But ability

is never enough in a Parliamentary system of government like ours. A man must have character. He must be the kind of man whom other men can trust and work with. That is just what Fox somehow failed to be. He worked in turn with Newcastle and Pitt, Devonshire and Bedford and Shelburne; but every one of them, and even his great friend and patron, Cumberland, a very honest man, found him impossible and broke with him in the end, or indeed, in several cases, soon after the beginning. George III., in whose service he had made himself the most hated man in England by the ruthless proscription of 1762, never seems to have been grateful to him or to have wished to have him back. Somehow, with very few exceptions, of whom Pelham is the most important (and though Pelham died young he had lived long enough to find Fox a troublesome colleague and to be suspected by Fox of intending to dismiss him), Fox's public and political friendships were as uncertain, uncomfortable, and shortlived as his private intimacies and family affections were unchanging and delightful.

It would almost seem as if he were two different men, following opposite courses and each so violently as to lead to his own misery. In his private relations, especially to his sons, he was all affection and sympathy. There the head had no control at all over the heart, which carried blind indulgence to such lengths as gave the father an old age of bitter disappointment and the sons a youth of recklessness and dishonour.

In his public life it was all the other way. There he was all head and, except in persistent efforts to do jobs for his private friends and relations, no heart at all. Shrewdness, common sense, practical capacity, a preference for peace, an eye to the material interests of the nation, at least where they did not conflict with his own, these were his characteristics as they were those of his master, Walpole. But he did not possess his master's greatest gift, an instinctive sense of what was going on in the mind of the nation and a readiness to defer to it when it could not safely be defied. Walpole would never have outraged opinion as Fox did by the proscription of 1762. He was very clear in his distinction between friends and foes, and he liked being master in his house; but his prudence would have told him that conduct of that sort was likely to leave him with no house to be master of. And then Walpole could safely do what Fox could not, for two reasons. First, he was a greater man; and then he lived in a smaller age. He had no Pitt to make his cynicism and corruption a mark for the scorn and indignation of England. Fox made his enormous fortune as Paymaster after Pitt had refused to make anything out of the same office. Fox in 1762 kept his shop at which members of Parliament came to sell their votes and get the current price for them five years after Pitt had scornfully refused to have anything to do with dirty business of that sort. The change was fatal. Walpole, after ruling England for a whole generation, was

never really unpopular. Fox was never, even for a moment, the ruler of England; and yet managed to get himself hated by both Parliament and people.

The truth is that from the moment that Pitt had stormed the citadel of power the old system was doomed. The men who worked it and lived by it were, of course, the last to perceive that sentence of death had been passed upon it. And they carried it on as well as they could. There was nothing in principle to separate the methods of George III. and North from those of Walpole. But they were no longer acquiesced in as Walpole's and Newcastle's were. There were no more elections like that of 1754, when only forty-two of all the seats in the House of Commons were contested. A very few years after that Pitt had taught not only George II., but the House itself, that there was such a thing as a public opinion which would not be ignored. Those years were the turning-point of Fox's career. He had refused before that election to become Newcastle's Secretary of State on Newcastle's terms. He had written to the Duke of Richmond of the impossibility of going back on his refusal: "What can't be done with honour can't be done at all." And, directly afterwards, he was feeling his way to an alliance with Pitt. But only a few months later he made the great mistake of his life. Against the advice of his wise patron, Cumberland, he deserted Pitt and consented, as Lord Ilchester says, to "bolster up the despicable

Administration" of Newcastle which, if he had been loyal to Pitt, must soon have fallen and placed them both in power.

If that had happened, his whole future might have been different. Cumberland had told him, in the very phrase afterwards used by Frederick the Great, "Pitt is, what is scarce, a man." That is, of course, just what Newcastle was not. Fox, who might have been the man's colleague and friend, preferred to be the old woman's agent and tool. He paid the price, politically and morally, for the rest of his life. It is true that he and Pitt were men of utterly different natures. But in some ways that made them all the fitter to work together. Pitt had the eagle eye which took in all the world; the genius of initiative, imagination, and command. His sphere was obviously high politics and the direction of the war. Fox knew and cared nothing about foreign politics; nor was he a man of ideas in any field. But he was, what Pitt was not, a man of business and a man who had learnt, in Walpole's school, those arts of management which Pitt disdained to practise. Even Pitt, as the failure of the Devonshire Ministry showed, could not, in those days, afford to do altogether without them. Fox could have done, no man more effectively, whatever was necessary in that line. Or, perhaps, if Pitt had had Fox by his side in that first venture, their united abilities could have defied Newcastle without being forced to imitate his methods. In any case, Fox would have been the gainer.

Some of the rays of Pitt's glory must necessarily have shone on his principal colleague. And perhaps something better still might have happened. One does not live with a man like Pitt for nothing. If Fox had stuck to Pitt in 1754 and afterwards, perhaps that year would have marked the upward instead of the downward turning-point in his character as well as in his career. Perhaps some such transformation might have come to him from a definite breach with Newcastle and a definite union with Pitt, as came afterwards to his brilliant son when he freed himself finally from the service of the Court and gave his whole heart and brain to the cause of the Whigs. And if moral changes of that kind, however possible at five-and-twenty, are scarcely probable in a man of fifty, yet even without any such miracles it is not inconceivable that an alliance between Pitt and Henry Fox might have lasted and had great results. If it had they would have faced the new reign and its intrigues together, and lived, perhaps, to bequeath the legacy of their unity as not the smallest part of that inheritance of fame which was to fall to their dearly-loved sons, instead of dying, as they did, isolated and alone, the one in a solitary splendour of glory, the other in the gloom of desertion, disappointment, and contempt.

The two Pitts were unlike in genius; the one the most willing and most gloriously successful of England's War Ministers, the other the most reluctant and unfortunate. But each was

pre-eminently a man ; each forced his way by right of genius to the first place, and ruled England almost like a Sovereign ; no one ever doubted the public patriotism or the private probity of either. The father died in his old age, the son in his prime, but in each case the bell that tolled for the death of William Pitt sounded in the ears of the nation as a knell of departed greatness. There is no such glorious parallel between Henry and Charles Fox. They had the same genius for private friendship, but in their public careers there is little in common. Henry was a mere man of business and practice. Charles was the most generous and famous of political amateurs. Henry had no political ideals, lived among the intrigues of party and faction, and scarcely realised that there was such a thing as a people of England. Charles was as much the first tribune of that people in the things of peace as Chatham had been in those of war ; and, though a much smaller man than Chatham, he was far more loved, because he himself loved others, both those whom he knew and those whom he did not know, with so much more generosity, frankness, and simplicity. Hard as it is to believe when we look at his portraits, it is certain that no one, in all the long line of our statesmen, has been the object of such passionate affection as Charles Fox. In this field his life was an unbroken series of triumphs. The magic which worked first upon the adoring father and affectionate schoolfellows of his boyhood, ended by conquering that

almost personal devotion of half the nation which surrounded his death-bed. That was what, in spite of many serious faults, had come to a heart which, without ever ceasing to love its own, had learned to beat for the whole human race, and especially for all who were the victims of cruelty, injustice, or wrong. Can anything be less like the end or the character of his father? When Henry Fox died there was no poet to declare that "many thousands" were sad, or to cry :—

> A Power is passing from the earth
> To breathless Nature's dark abyss.

And if there had been his words would have found no response. It is not to efficiency, not to success in making a fortune, not even to the negative virtues of honesty and plain dealing, that such tributes, coming from such men, are paid. By the side of his son, as by the side of Chatham, Henry Fox shrinks into insignificance.

Does he shrink lower still? Chatham refused the chance of making the very fortune which Fox made: and Fox's sons made away with it even before it was theirs. There is no virtue in dissipating a fortune, least of all as Charles and Stephen Fox dissipated theirs: and there is no vice in making one if it be, as the virtuous Evelyn said of the first Fox's fortune, "honestly gotten and unenvied." But was that the case with the fortune of Henry Fox? To that question, perhaps, no unqualified answer can be given. He certainly never was consciously

dishonest. In many ways he was a much honester man than most of his contemporaries. He never knowingly broke a promise and never forgot a friend. So says Lord Ilchester, with a good deal of truth; though the friends whom he allowed, and even incited, his colleagues to insult and disgrace in 1762 might not be ready to admit his only possible excuse, the necessities of the King's service. Still his loyalty to his personal if not to his political friends need not be questioned. Nor will his truthfulness. He was too strong a man to be a liar. George II. said of him, "I'll do him justice, I don't believe he ever did tell me a lie"; adding the illuminating comment: "he's the only man that ever came into my closet that did not." Yet he accumulated such hatred that when Pitt resigned in 1761, and Bute thought of Fox, he was told it would be madness to "go from the most popular man in England to the most unpopular"; and a few years later the Livery of London described him, in a petition to the King, as "the public defaulter of uncounted millions." This charge was untrue and collapsed at once before inquiry in the House of Commons. All the claims upon him were met by himself or his executors; and the delay in settling them was not his or their fault. But the fact remained that he had pocketed sums that could be described as "uncounted millions" out of public funds. The system, which lasted till 1780, allowed the Paymaster to retain in his own hands large sums of public money, and to speculate with them to

his own profit in the interval between receiving them and paying them out. These profits were the lawful and admitted perquisites of the office. But Pitt, and even Henry Pelham, had refused to touch them. What Pitt desired was power, not money, and the last thing he was prepared to sacrifice for the sake of money was any shred of his self-conscious probity and honour. When Fox took the Paymastership in 1757 he gave up the chance of power for the certainty of a fortune. How great that fortune would be he could not have dreamed. He could not know that the years during which he held the office were to be mostly years of war, and war carried on with Pitt's splendid profusion. The millions fell unexpected, almost unsought, into Fox's lap. They came to a far greater prize than had fallen to any previous Paymaster. It was legal to take them. But would any scrupulously honest man have done so, when they became so immeasurably greater than any figure that could reasonably be regarded as a fair remuneration for the work done?

That is the question. Lord Ilchester does not altogether defend Fox, but pleads that a man's conduct must be judged by the standard of his day. So, perhaps, it may in fairness claim to be, in spite of Acton's indignant repudiation of the doctrine when Creighton used it in excuse of the medieval Popes. But the difficulty is that it will not really serve in Fox's case. The truth is that his standard was that of Walpole's day, not that of his own. Public opinion outside

the charmed circle of politicians, and within it the shining examples of Pitt and Pelham, had altered the standard. Even Newcastle, who spent his life doing jobs for others, would do none for himself, and, refusing a pension, left office poorer than he entered upon it. That was the secret of Fox's unpopularity. It may have begun in hatred of his patron Cumberland; it may have been fostered by the intrigues of Leicester House. But what increased it to the odium which surrounded his later years was an immense fortune, provoking, not only the envy which, till men are wiser and better, such fortunes, however innocent, will almost always provoke, but the indignation inevitably aroused by great wealth acquired by light labours, at the public expense, and by methods condemned by the best opinion and the highest examples of the time.

There it is once more, the contrast between the father and the son: between the most detested of our statesmen and the idol of Parliament and people. The virtues of Henry Fox were almost all private; his vices all public. The beloved Charles's vices were private and his chief victim himself. His virtues were public and the fruits of them were reaped by his country, by all Europe, and, it is not too much to say, by the whole human race.

VII

LORD GREY *

THE second Earl Grey occupies a unique position among English Prime Ministers. Of all who held that great office in the nineteenth century only Portland, Percival, Canning, Goderich, Wellington, and Lord Rosebery held it for a shorter time. And of these Portland had already been Prime Minister in 1783, and all had frequently held high offices under other Prime Ministers. Grey alone had to form a Ministry and govern the country with practically no previous official training. Over twenty years before he had been for little more than a year a member of the Ministry of All the Talents. That was all. Yet this elderly, inexperienced nobleman, a man of domestic tastes, apathetic temperament, and no extraordinary intellectual powers, carried the country through the greatest internal crisis it had known since the Revolution and was the author of what still remains, after nearly a hundred years, not only the greatest of Reform Bills but the most famous measure ever passed through Parliament. And both achievements were to an unusual degree his own. He

* *Times* Literary Supplement, March 25, 1920.

had able colleagues, but it was he, more than any of them—more perhaps than all of them put together—who first prevented the popular excitement from boiling over into a violent revolution, and then, avoiding with a skill which approaches genius all the dangers which beset him from friends and foes, Court and Lords, Commons and people, made the Bill, which was his Bill, the law of the land. The measure of his greatness may be stated in the ancient words: after him, except for the brief Chartist disturbance, "the land had rest forty years." His measure settled once for all the principle of Reform which till then had been angrily disputed. It endured unaltered till 1867, and all subsequent Bills have been merely extensions of the work it began. More than any other Act of Parliament it marks the beginning of the new era in our history. It meant that King and Parliament, threatened with revolution by those outside the political system, met the threat, for the first time, simply by inviting the discontented to come inside and share with them both power and responsibility That has been our policy ever since; and it is due to it that we alone among the nations of Europe have passed the ninety years since Grey took office not only without revolution, but almost without such a word as revolution being known in our current political vocabulary. And for that it is not too much to say that the man whom we have primarily and principally to thank is the man who took the decisive step at the moment of danger, the man to whom Mr.

George Trevelyan has here * happily given a title unknown to the College of Heralds, Lord Grey of the Reform Bill.

There is another way in which Grey's position among our Prime Ministers is unique. It is not only that he did a far greater work than any one else whose life as a Cabinet Minister lasted less than five years. It is that while he ranks among the great Prime Ministers he owes his greatness, unlike any of them, entirely to a single achievement. He may have saved us from war with France over the Belgian question in 1830–32. But that though a very important is also a negative and hypothetical service. On the whole, he lives by the Reform Bill alone. Pitt was the destroyer of the Whig oligarchy and the first of reforming Prime Ministers before he became the " pilot that weathered the storm." Peel was the creator of our modern Civil Service before he became the founder of Free Trade. Gladstone had attained his first and most undisputed title to fame by his financial achievements before he touched either the Irish Church or the franchise or Home Rule. There is nothing of this in Grey. He emerges from comparative obscurity to carry the Reform Bill, and if that had proved a failure his name would have been entirely forgotten in ten years. Even as it is, the Bill has been remembered far better than its author. And the truth is that in a sense

* " Lord Grey of the Reform Bill: Being the Life of Charles, second Earl Grey," by George Macaulay Trevelyan. (Longmans. 21s. net.)

he owes as much to it as it to him. It may be that in this case, as sometimes happens, the work was greater than the man. At least it strangely inspired him, magnifying altogether his moral and intellectual stature. Never before, and never again, so far as those who now read his life can judge, was either his will or his judgment what it was in those fateful two years between the day he took office in 1830 and the day the Bill passed into law in 1832. This book is the record of an interesting life and a delightful personality. But except for those two years it would never have been written or even thought of.

Mr. Trevelyan has many qualifications for his task. The son of his father, the great-nephew of Macaulay, could not but be born with the Whig tradition in his blood, could not but be nurtured in its lore from his very cradle. There are two—perhaps only two—very great moments in the history of the Whigs—the two moments in which they saved England, 1688 and 1832. Macaulay wrote the history of the one and played his part in the other. Sir George Trevelyan was brought up at his uncle's feet and wrote his life; and he himself was one of the chief actors in that movement for the extension of the vote to the agricultural labourer, finally carried out in 1885, which completed the enfranchisement of the householder begun in 1832. His son, the writer of this book, has never sat in Parliament. But ever since the world knew anything about him, and probably

long before, he has shown his devotion to the double family tradition of history and politics. Names change and ideas grow. The Liberal of to-day is not the same thing as the Whig of 1688, or even of 1832. But he is after all the son of his father, and, if he is a wise man, is proud of it. That is what Mr. Trevelyan certainly is. The creed which his father inherited from Macaulay, which Macaulay imbibed at Holland House and expounded in his History, the creed of religious and political liberty, has always been his creed. And few in this generation have served it better than the historian of Wycliffe, of the Long Parliament, of Garibaldi, of John Bright, and now of Lord Grey of the Reform Bill.

At first sight these would appear to be strange heroes for a historian nursed in the Whig tradition. But observe one thing. They are all practical men. They are all men who prefer half a loaf to no bread. But for the opposition of the Army the Long Parliament would have come to terms with Charles I. Garibaldi worked with Victor Emmanuel as soon as he saw that Monarchy could do for Italy what a Republic could not do. And both Wycliffe and Bright were nearer to Garibaldi and the moderate majority of the Long Parliament than they were to the Fifth Monarchy men, the Levellers, or Mazzini. That spirit of practical compromise, of being content to take what one can get and move step by step, advancing to the future without losing touch with the past, is the very

essence of Whiggism. It is the first article in the creed which the Whigs taught England in 1688, and which all English parties, with varying degrees of willingness and intelligence, have practised ever since: the creed which for 200 years has made the English combination of stability and progress the wonder and envy of a Europe almost always in danger of falling a prey either to stereotyped conservatism or to impracticable idealism. Its records do not make such picturesque reading as those of the uncompromising dreamers and revolutionaries. But if its colours are not so rich, they have the advantage of wearing well. Cromwell is a more interesting figure than the Whig lords of 1688, but his work disappeared with him, while theirs lasted for 150 years. Indeed, it may be said to have contained within it not only 1832 but 1867, 1885, and 1917. So, some would say, in matters of religion. Luther and Calvin were greater men than Cranmer, but England retains to-day much more of Cranmer than Germany or France retain of his greater rivals. And so, to come back to Mr. Trevelyan, with his latest hero, Lord Grey. The men who revolutionised France when he was a young member of Parliament will always be much more famous, or notorious, than he. But their political edifice crumbled at once into dust at the breath of Napoleon, and they left their country to be the sport for eighty years of alternate revolution and reaction. Lord Grey's less original structure still stands unshaken. Some of its chief features

have been modified or developed to meet new needs. But not one has been destroyed, and there is no difficulty in recognizing the building of to-day as that which he reconstructed with such an admirable mixture of boldness and reverence.

Mr. Trevelyan's book is a record of the long apprenticeship served by Lord Grey and of the four hurried and crowded years in which he at last had the chance of practising his art with the freedom and authority of a master. Every one who knows Mr. Trevelyan's previous books will be sure beforehand that this tale, like the others, loses nothing in the telling. Of course it cannot compare in interest for a moment with the story of the Liberation of Italy. Lord Grey is no rival to Garibaldi, and the greatest of Parliamentary struggles makes very tame reading after the immortal adventure of the Thousand. The appeal of the new book is altogether narrower. It is to England instead of to the world. It is to those who like the study of Parliamentary history instead of to those who like "moving accidents by flood and field." But within its own limits and for its own public the work could not be better done, and will confirm and establish its author's reputation as a biographer and historian. It is brilliantly written, and the right reader, especially the lover of English political history, so much the most interesting and important in the world, will not willingly lay it down till he has drunk his cup of pleasure to the last drop. It is full, too, of interesting judgments

on matters which only incidentally come within its scope. Pitt and Fox, for instance, are an old story. But the contrast between them has not often been better put than it is here :—

The wits of Brooks's jested about Pitt's youth. But in fact he was prematurely old in spirit—cautious, dignified, formidable, experienced, laborious, wise ; but with a mind that, after a splendid spring-time, too soon became closed to generous enthusiasms and new ideas, and ceased to understand human nature save as it is known to a shrewd and cynical Government Whip. He was still being twitted as "the schoolboy" when he had acquired all the characteristics of the schoolmaster. While Fox always retained the faults and merits of youth, Pitt early acquired those of old age.

More original, though not more interesting —for nothing political ever equalled the interest of the story of Pitt and Fox except the story of Pitt's father—is a judgment of the great political world of that day. Mr. Trevelyan is a Liberal, even a Radical, as all his books show. But he remarks of Grey's first speech that

by a brilliant piece of invective on the wrong side of a subject that he did not understand Grey at once became one of the most envied in that most enviable of all the aristocracies of history, the men and women who look out from the canvases of Reynolds and Romney with a divine self-satisfaction, bred of unchallenged possession of all that was really best in a great civilization.

A little later he describes the transformation of that splendid society, which, as he says, had

" neither the virtues nor the vices of the austere " till it was frightened by the French Revolution and reclaimed by the Evangelical movement. He gives it in an interesting parallel. " The change from the high society that Fox led to that of the generation which ostracised Byron is an English version of the change from the Renaissance Courts of the early Cinque Cento to the Italy of the Jesuit reaction." So again it is a striking remark that if the Whigs who fought Pitt's measures of repression had not been great aristocrats they " would not then have dared to side with democracy." Only their aristocratic indifference to unpopularity made it possible for them to maintain in the darkest days such causes as those of Reform and Catholic Emancipation. From the heights of Devonshire House they could look down with contempt on the hostility of all the squires and manufacturers in the country. Occasionally these judgments of Mr. Trevelyan's invite question or qualification. He makes the interesting remark that up to the death of Queen Anne General Elections were decided by the changes of political opinion in the country, so that England was able to enforce her will in every big question that came up, but that afterwards the nation was helpless in the hands of the boroughmongers. This is largely true, of course; but, without holding Burke's strange doctrine of the sacrosanctity of rotten boroughs, one may admit that it was by the pressure of public opinion that Chatham rose to power and Bute and North fell; that it was the

unreformed constituencies who gave Pitt his great majority in 1784, and that it was still they, with all the rotten boroughs intact, which elected the Parliament that reformed itself and destroyed the old system. The truth surely is that the reason why the French had revolution while we had reform was that in France before 1789 the Government could totally disregard public opinion, however strong, while in England it never altogether could. Even the all-powerful Pitt of 1794 had to draw back from his prosecutions for sedition when London juries taught him that public opinion felt he was going too far.

These illustrations show that the book is more than a mere Life of Grey. It was undertaken at the request of the late Earl Grey, and in writing it Mr. Trevelyan has had free access to the family papers at Howick as well as to others referring to his subject at Holland House and Lambton Castle; and he acknowledges his obligations to Sir Algernon West, Lord Spencer, and Lord Grey's grandson, the present Lord Halifax, for the communication of other documents and family traditions. But from the first he intended to go, and he has gone, outside the merely biographical field. He has used materials provided by the British Museum and the Home Office to show the state of public opinion, and especially the feelings of the working classes, throughout Grey's life, and especially during the two critical periods, that of 1793–97, when he was making Reform motions in a hostile

Parliament, and that of 1830–32, when his firmness forced his Bill through Parliament unaltered, and in the judgment of Mr. Trevelyan, "averted civil war and saved the State from entering on the vicious circle of revolution and reaction."

On both these occasions Grey was very closely concerned with the excited state of working-class opinion, on the first as the Parliamentary leader of the Reformers, on the second as the head of the Government responsible for the King's peace. Perhaps Mr. Trevelyan, seeing things from the point of view of his hero, underrates the danger in 1794 and exaggerates it in 1832. Finding as he does that in "the days of May," 1832, neither the private correspondence of Wellington, Peel, and Croker, nor that of Grey, Althorp, and Holland, contains any allusion to the fear of armed rebellion if the Duke took office, he concludes that "*noblesse* obliged them to avoid allusion to a subject so indecorous." But this seems rather far-fetched. Wellington, at any rate, was never afraid of calling a spade a spade. A likelier explanation is that he, and the others, believed that the danger was not so great as Mr. Trevelyan thinks, and that any armed rebellion could have been put down. It was the attitude of the House of Commons, not the threats of the agitators, which forced the Duke to retreat. It may seem to a good many readers that Mr. Trevelyan makes the opposite mistake about 1794. Nobody now defends all the measures then taken by Pitt, still

less all, one might almost say any, of the proceedings of the Scottish Judges. But nobody who judges Pitt ought to forget, as Mr. Trevelyan is too much inclined to do, the contrast between 1830 and 1794. It is the contrast between Louis Philippe and Robespierre. The Revolution of 1830 excited England, but it was a very different thing from its predecessor, which, as Lord Rosebery has pointed out, was "encouraging revolt in England and promising support to rebellion before any exceptional measures were taken by the British Government." It seems certain now that Pitt exaggerated the danger. The folly of the Reformers who consorted with the Paris Jacobins and called themselves "citizens" at once involved them in the extreme unpopularity of the French, and Pitt's measures of repression were, as his enemies themselves admit, popular even among the mass of the working classes. Pitt would be a greater man if he had known his countrymen better and trusted them more. But the French Revolution was a portent without precedent or parallel. Pitt saw France prostrate at the feet of a small body of cruel fanatics; he was resolved to take no risks in England; and, if he is to be blamed, it is not for that resolve, but for not being so far in advance of his time as to perceive that against revolution the best weapon is generally not repression, but reform.

Grey, unfettered by the responsibilities of office, was free to advocate a more generous policy. He made motions for reform in 1792,

1793, and in 1797. He opposed Pitt's policy of fear and repression. And, what was more important still, he, more than any man, prepared the Whigs to become the Liberal Party. If Burke and Portland had carried the Whigs with them, Reform could only have come from the Radicals, and our present dangerous horizontal divisions of party would have been anticipated by a hundred years. As it was, when Grey founded the Friends of the People in April, 1792, he took as momentous a step as when, forty years later, he insisted on his Reform Bill. There was not, indeed, anything absolutely new in the existence of such a body, for there had been Reform associations, to which Pitt had belonged, before it. What was new was the connexion of such an association with a great party, which was achieved as soon as Grey had secured the support of Fox. The anti-Reform Whigs then left the party and the Whigs were definitely committed to Reform.

One other point, the last that can be touched on here. The ultimate significance of a step is often unperceived by those who take it. The Friends of the People were a small body, only about 150 in all. They were all "noblemen and gentlemen." But when Grey and Lauderdale placed their aristocratic names at the head of a body of that kind they started on a course from which there could be no turning back. In vain they dissociated themselves from other and more democratic societies which shared their aims and added others not theirs. The Tories

who denounced them knew better. The decisive step had been taken. From that day forward the Whig Party would throw itself slowly but increasingly on the public opinion of the country, and would ultimately force all parties to do the same. When Peel was victorious in 1841, Disraeli in 1874, Salisbury in 1886, their victories were not those of the old forces by which North and even Pitt had ruled the country. They were the victories of public opinion, of free debate and discussion, of a method less and less easily distinguished from what was once denounced as political agitation. The germs of all these things, and of how much else that he could not dream of, lay in Grey's Friends of the People. The end is not yet. The will of the nation, ascertained by the polling booth after open discussion, is now the acknowledged arbiter of all political issues. If its title is ever disputed, it is no longer by the Right but by the Extreme Left. But we did not adopt a French solution of our difficulties 130 years ago, and the English character must have greatly changed if we adopt a Russian solution to-day. It is not likely that even the earthquake shock of the war has transformed us into dreamers, extremists, or fanatics. After it, as before, England will probably remain the land of common sense, compromise, and practical progress. And if it does, it will never cease to honour the Whigs who, in liberty's evil days, fought against repression, defended free speech, abolished slavery, and finally gave the country

Reform without revolution. And among them, after the beloved name of Fox, it will remember no one with more gratitude than that distinguished aristocrat who laid the legal foundations of democracy, Charles Lord Grey of the Reform Bill.

VIII

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL *

With a single exception, Lord Randolph Churchill's rise to the first place in the House of Commons is the most dazzling personal triumph in English Parliamentary history. No parallel can be found to it except that which goes far beyond a parallel, the amazing victory which, exactly a hundred years before, the genius and courage of a boy of twenty-four won over the united forces of all the veterans of the House of Commons. That achievement stands alone; and its equal is not likely to be found, even though the House of Commons should live another 500 years. But such parallel as there is anywhere is to be seen in the career of Lord Randolph Churchill.† In January, 1781, Pitt was only a proud boy, who had inherited the greatest of all political names. Three years later he was Prime Minister. In 1881 Lord Randolph Churchill was the leader of a party of four, and he and his party were the established political joke of the day. In 1886 he was the leader of the House of Commons, with every eye fixed on him as the man of the future. But there, except for the brevity of the two lives, the parallel ends altogether. The swiftness of

* *Times* Literary Supplement, January 5, 1906.

† "Lord Randolph Churchill," by Winston Spencer Churchill, M.P. Two volumes. (Macmillan. 36*s*. net.)

Pitt's rise to power was scarcely more remarkable than the tenacity with which he retained it. Lord Randolph's fall was even swifter than his rise. And it was final. When Pitt died in 1806, of the forty-six years of his life nearly twenty had been passed as Prime Minister. Lord Randolph was also on the point of being forty-six when he died; but he had known only a year of office and only six months of power. Perhaps the story that Mr. Winston Churchill tells in this book loses nothing from the sense of the impending catastrophe which must be in the mind of every one who reads it. There is, indeed, in Lord Randolph's career a comedy, a history, and a tragedy; a comedy of irresponsible youth—Blenheim Harriers, and rehearsals at hunt dinners of the Jack the Giant Killer impudences which were afterwards to stagger more important assemblies; next, from 1883–86, a history in which, with Napoleonic vigour, speed, and ruthlessness, he transforms his party, leads it to victory, and becomes himself the most powerful man in England; and then, from 1887 to 1895, a tragedy in which those ancient forces, fate and a too free will, both play their parts, till the curtain falls on the last sad months in which the indomitable courage of the victim only increases the pain of those who watch him die. Never was there a case in which we so inevitably think the thoughts which an obscurer political tragedy drew from Burke:—"What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue!"

It is a pleasure to be able to say that a life so

well worth writing has been admirably written. Sons have not always proved the most judicious of biographers, and Mr. Winston Churchill's warmest admirers would not ask us to think him the most judicious of men. But here is a book which is certainly among the two or three most exciting political biographies in the language, and yet the young Achilles has done due honour to Patroclus without sacrificing any slaughtered Trojans on the funeral pyre. The book is a son's book, of course, written from a particular point of view; and there are, of course, things which might be said against Lord Randolph Churchill but are not said here. That is inevitable; but the worst kind of biographer is not he who has a point of view, but he who has not—and certainly Mr. Winston Churchill has not unduly obtruded his. One hears the son's voice in a good many places, and hears it willingly; the voice of the politician one hardly ever hears. Good taste has not generally been considered the strong point either of the biographer or of his father; nor has either of them been conspicuous for self-restraint. But the severest critic will find very few lapses of taste in this book; and for those few it is not the writer's pen, but his subject's tongue, that is responsible. And as for self-restraint, who could have believed that Mr. Winston Churchill could write a book that is full of Mr. Chamberlain, and not altogether empty of Mr. Balfour, and yet write it like an historian, and not at all like a man on a party platform? But he has. Even the temptation

of the fair trade controversy, and Lord Randolph's conversion to economic orthodoxy, has not made him swerve from the path of virtue. Once, and once only, so far as we have noticed, does he indulge himself in the luxury of using the past to point the moral of the present. And then the allusion is as innocent as it is isolated. It occurs in the account of his father's resignation. "It is no doubt true that he rated his own power . . . too high. Like many a successful man before him—*and some since*—he thought the forces he had directed in the past were resident in himself, whereas they were to some extent outside himself and independent." The italics are not in the original; and, even with their assistance, this single shaft shot at our existing political actualities can hardly be said to look very venomous.

But let there be no mistake. Virtue does not necessarily imply dullness. The book is, on the whole, a serious and fair-minded record of Lord Randolph's career. But its interest never flags for a moment. No one who cares for politics will willingly put it down when it is once in his hands. People who do not care for politics had better not touch it. There are other lives of politicians which may suit them, but not this. Mr. Gladstone, for instance, might have been an Archbishop, if fate had so willed it, or a college don; so that Mr. Morley was certain beforehand of a large circle of academic and ecclesiastical readers. But no one can imagine Lord Randolph anything but a politician. And whatever else he was is not the concern of

this book. It is written for politicians; and by them it will be read eagerly, excitedly, and often enthusiastically, from the first page to the last. There is every dish in it that can whet their palates; all the things that every one wants to know and only a very few can find out; the real views that lie behind the plausibilities of the platform, the private relations that lie behind public politeness, all the secret springs of which the world sees only the resulting acts. And yet it is no book of the backstairs. The revelations are of things of real interest, and are given in letters from the actors themselves published with their consent. Sir Michael Hicks Beach, who was more closely associated with Lord Randolph in his two great years than any one else, has "thoroughly revised the whole book." A large number of letters to and from Lord Salisbury and Mr. Chamberlain, and some to and from the Duke of Devonshire, give the changing picture of his relations with each. It is characteristic of his hot-headedness that with each there is a sharp quarrel. And yet, for all these exciting personalities, there are no windows broken; unless, indeed, it be those of the Cabinet. How far will that august and so edifying fiction, the unity of the Cabinet, survive the successive attacks of Mr. Morley, Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, and Mr. Churchill? Perhaps no one ever believed it in the inner chamber of his mind; but no one goes into those inner chambers very often; and for daylight and the street and the platform, it

passed very well as one of the solemn plausibilities of our political system. But will that be possible any longer after the man in the street has seen Lord Randolph "alone in the Cabinet" of which the world supposed him to be the most powerful member, Lord Salisbury wishing there were "no such thing as Local Government" after an *eirenicon* which he had proposed had been abruptly rejected by his colleagues, and, most startling of all, Mr. Gladstone rejoicing over "only three resignations" at a Cabinet meeting?

However, nothing would have disturbed Lord Randolph less than that he, or his Life, should be the means of exploding any number of venerable fictions. And for the rest of us, it is a satisfaction to observe that, if the corporate Cabinet suffers, the individuals that compose it come out, for the most part, unscathed. The wisdom and patience and self-abnegation of Lord Salisbury, to whose great qualities Mr. Churchill pays more than one generous tribute, the "grave, calm, slow-moving" mind of the Duke of Devonshire, the sacrifices of office and power and political prospects actually made by the Duke and Lord James and Mr. Chamberlain, on the Liberal Unionist side, and met, on the Conservative side, by the most evidently sincere offers of the same self-abnegation on the part of Lord Salisbury and Lord Randolph Churchill—these things all come to give us a feeling that, after all has been said, English public life is still a thing we have a right to be proud of, a great life, greatly and honourably lived.

However, one may hope that there is nothing new or surprising about this; though there are people who will say that a Life of Lord Randolph Churchill is not exactly the place where they would have expected to discover such consolation. But that is part of the interest of the book; it contains a good many things that one would not expect to find in it. Who, for instance, except the very few who have been behind the most secret political curtains, will not be surprised to learn that the first meeting between Lord Salisbury and Mr. Chamberlain occurred at the Turf Club, of all places in the world? Napoleon and Alexander met to divide the world on the neutral ground of a boat moored in the middle of the Niemen; and if, for these meetings of great potentates, a place has to be found where neither will feel himself too much at home, Lord Randolph, who arranged this meeting, may be congratulated on the abundant fitness of the ground he chose. Certainly he meant to succeed. This book brings out how eagerly from the first he pressed a coalition on Lord Salisbury. In November, 1885, directly Mr. Gladstone was known to be committed to Home Rule, he wrote:—

I think you ought to negotiate with the other side, giving Hartington India, Goschen Home Office, and Rosebery Scotch Office. You will never get Whig support so long as I am in the Government, and Whig support you must have.

To which Lord Salisbury drily replied, "They

hate me as much as they hate you" : and, some months later :—

I observe that Hartington, whenever he has the chance, dwells with so much conviction upon my "rashness," etc., that I suspect I am more the difficulty than you. I believe the G.O.M., if he were driven to so frightful a dilemma, would rather work with me than with you ; but that with Hartington it is the reverse.

The whole of the story of the years 1885–87 and the gradual passage of the Liberal Unionists from correspondence with Mr. Gladstone to co-operation with Lord Salisbury is told here with an authoritative fullness which is at once new and final. Mr. Morley had told it from the other side ; he could not tell it from this. Among other new things in the book the most startling is probably the fact that Lord Randolph resigned the India Office in August, 1885, because Lord Salisbury had sent Lord Dufferin a letter from the Queen about an appointment for the Duke of Connaught without making any communication with him ; and the most important is the elaborate Budget scheme he had submitted to the Cabinet before his final resignation. Of that it is enough to say here that even its author never produced anything bolder, and that no Budget since *—not even the famous one of Sir William Harcourt—has made anything like such a courageous attempt to cover the whole ground. Budgets have always proved slippery

* Written, of course, in January, 1906.

things, and probably even Lord Randolph's tenacious fingers would not have managed to hold this intact to the end. Its main lines were sweeping reductions of the income-tax and the tea and tobacco duties met by a complete reconstruction of the death and house duties on a graduated scale, and by several new taxes. But more exciting than either the Budget or the first resignation, and almost equally new as far as the details are concerned, are the accounts of the defeat of Lord Salisbury and capture of the National Union in 1884, of the formation of the two Ministries of 1885 and 1886, and of the final resignation at the end of the latter year. There are many people who find—some of them half against the grain—that Westminster and Pall Mall are, for them, the most interesting places in all the world, and the game of politics its only really exciting game; and by all of them these chapters will be devoured with breathless eagerness. They will at least have the pleasure of seeing their favourite game splendidly and audaciously played. Lord Randolph knew what he wanted from the first and meant to have it. He had unbounded confidence in himself, and might have said in the early eighties, almost in the first Pitt's words, "I know that I can save this party and I know that no one else can." He was not a man to lose time in the "beatific state of chronic deliberation" which he found so common in the Cabinet when he got there. The Tory party appeared to him to be going to sleep, and he did not care whose bones were broken

in the process of waking it up. He chose his ground well, and when he had taken his stand on it he never once retreated. All through these controversies he showed a great soldier's instinct in taking up a strong position, luring the enemy into a weak one, and then smiting him in full strength and without a moment's delay. And, so far as politics are a mere game to be played, or a mere battle to be won, he never made a serious mistake till the final one, the commonest of all, which no one had more excuse for making than he. But the excuse was of no avail. The world is never fond of people who fancy it cannot do without them; and the letter from Windsor Castle, like similar documents before and since, found no more agreeable answer than that ancient but chilling maxim, "il n'y a pas d'homme nécessaire." There is always a Goschen somehow on these occasions, and it does not do to forget him.

But a biography is, after all, more as well as less than a history; its business is not merely to relate events but to paint a portrait—what sort of portrait of Lord Randolph is it that this book ultimately leaves on the memory? In some respects, that of a more complex personality than has generally been believed. Who would have suspected, for instance, that Lord Randolph, in his speeches the rudest man, perhaps, who ever sat on the front bench, had in private "an old-world courtesy of manner" that astonished the Treasury and made Mr. Gladstone call him "the most courtly man I ever met"? Or,

again, what could surprise most people more than to find Lord Randolph writing to Miss Jerome shortly before their marriage :—

I strongly recommend you to read some great works and histories ; . . . novels, or even travels, are rather unsatisfactory and do one no good, because they create an unhealthy excitement which is bad for any one.

and, in the same letter—

I have two old favourites. When I feel very cross and angry I read Gibbon whose profound philosophy and easy though majestic writing soon quiets me down, and in an hour I feel at peace with all the world. When I feel very low and desponding I read Horace, whose thorough epicureanism, quiet maxims, and beautiful verse are most tranquillising. Of late I have had frequent recourse to my two friends, and they have never failed me.

It may be noted, too, that he quoted *Non ebur neque aureum* in the House of Commons in 1884 at the expense of Mr. W. H. Smith, whose " brilliant, ingenious, and fertile mind " had invented the argument that Irishmen who lived in mud cabins were not fit to vote. His son tells us that in his early days he knew three books almost by heart—the Bible, Gibbon, and " Jorrocks." The " resignation " chapter in this book is headed by a passage from Dryden which Mr. Churchill found copied out in his father's hand ; those fine lines which end, " But what has been has been, and I have had my hour." So that Lord Randolph, too, was not

altogether without the love of letters traditional among English statesmen. But these and other indications of the conventional English gentleman of culture are only the details of the portrait. The broad impression is still that of the astonishing young man of whom no one could say whether his impudence was greater than his ability, or his ability greater than his impudence. "De l'audace et toujours de l'audace" was always his motto; and his life is a series of defiances beginning with schoolmasters at Eton, police magistrates at Oxford, and masters of hounds in the hunting field, and proceeding quite naturally to the magnates of his party and the House. Even in his marriage he was as rapid and audacious as in everything else. He proposed to Miss Jerome on the third night of their acquaintance, and when his father delayed the marriage by "unnecessary rigmarole and verbosity," was only prevented by a timely surrender from a most vigorous scheme of reprisals to be carried out through the medium of the borough of Woodstock. Everywhere and in everything he is a person who makes things livelier by his entrance into a room. Public life does not contain too many people who enliven the course of official routine as he did, by such questions as the "Was I a bimetallist when I was at the India Office?" with which he startled Sir Arthur Godley; or that other, "Are the consumers represented upon this deputation?" which he put with crushing gravity to a deputation of sugar refiners.

That was the man. The statesman is, perhaps, less easy to be sure about. Two things, however, are brought out pretty clearly in this book, his essential consistency and his loyalty to his party. Towards his friends and colleagues, indeed, he seems to have been deficient in the kind of loyalty which alone makes political co-operation possible. Sir John Gorst and Mr. Jennings, after the closest political alliance with him, conceived themselves so badly treated by him that they broke off all correspondence and never resumed it. Mr. Chamberlain felt so injured by his conduct at one time that he wrote to him in the third person. Lord Salisbury, after a brief intimacy during which he wrote Lord Randolph 110 letters in seven months, accepted his resignation without reluctance and never desired his return. The truth is that Lord Randolph was too wilful, too arbitrary, too masterful, to act for long with men who would not be his puppets. That would not so much have mattered if he had had it in him to follow the wise advice Mr. Labouchere gave him at the time of his resignation—"Sacrifice everything to becoming a fetish; then, and only then, you can do as you like." But patience, the first necessity of an English statesman, was a quality of which he knew nothing; and his imperious impatience was his ruin. Still, this incapacity for getting on with men involved no disloyalty to principle. Few, indeed, are the prominent statesmen who have so few inconsistencies in their record. The best service Mr. Churchill has done his father's

memory is the conclusive proof he gives that his extremely generous views about Ireland, so often supposed to have been taken up with an eye to Parnell's support, date from his first residence in Ireland during his father's Viceroyalty. And the Liberal opinions which he found to be so distasteful to the "rampant and irrepressible Toryism" of Lord Salisbury's Cabinet were profoundly sincere. But the question, which, perhaps, he never sufficiently asked himself, is whether a man who believed in local option and one man one vote, who "regarded Liberal measures as things good and desirable in themselves," and who could say even in joke that he cared more for the Eight Hours Bill than for Monarchy, Church, or House of Lords, had any business in the Conservative party at all? He was loyal in action, as his conduct from 1887 to his death, with its many resistances to temptation and its few surrenders, shows; but could he possibly be loyal in thought?

That was perhaps the unhealthiest side of his influence on politics—that, and the vulgar licence of personal abuse he always practised, which did more than has been done by any one else to lower the dignity and amenity of English public life. A statesman of the highest order he certainly was not. In political faith and courage, the spring of all great achievement, he almost equalled Gladstone and Disraeli, and he surpassed Lord Salisbury and Mr. Balfour; but he had nothing of Lord Salisbury's large

wisdom, and nothing of Mr. Balfour's intellectual fertility. Most of all, perhaps, he was wanting in the higher qualities of the imagination. He lived entirely on the earth, in the street, one might say, with his eyes on the polling booth, and his hopes on the next general election. He could never touch the national imagination on the moral side as Gladstone could, making voters and politicians feel the issue of the moment as part of the eternal duel between the spirit of evil and the spirit of good; nor on the historical side as, at his best, Disraeli could, making a public meeting a place in which the very air seemed full of august memories. Such things were not in him to do. But what he could do he did. And the man who in four years completely transformed a great party, and prepared it for twenty years of power, will not be forgotten so long as English parties exist and English political history is read.

IX

OPTIMIST AND PESSIMIST*

WHAT is an optimist? We know what a pessimist is. At least we know that entertaining definition which has truth as well as wit in it: "What is a pessimist? Why, a man who lives with an optimist." It is a sort of new reading of the ancient *optimi corruptio pessima*. And probably its reverse is also true; an optimist is a man who lives with a pessimist. But in both cases the truth involved is the smaller part of the whole; we are not so unhappily made that the main influence of our friends and neighbours is that of provoking a reaction. All of us, in so far as we are really human, feel a desire of agreement with those about us; a large part of our happiness consists in moral and intellectual harmony. We learn from each other, every hour get knowledge, opinions, sympathies, admirations from each other. Everybody has watched the process of a whole group of people being infected with some enthusiasm which before existed only in some one of its members. And of course we catch other things from our friends; things less good than knowledge or enthusiasm. In any case, it is clear, on the whole.

* *Times* Literary Supplement, March 1, 1917.

that the epigram about the pessimist has the amount of truth required in epigrams but not much more. If we ourselves are perverse people, or if our friends are, we act on each other as irritants. But in ordinary circumstances and in the case of men and women of ordinary human sympathies, the temper and opinions of those with whom we live are forces not of repulsion but of attraction.

Nor, of course, could a mere definition by opposites carry us very far. Yet the question is, especially at the present time, interesting and even important. Since August, 1914, the nation has been almost divided into optimists and pessimists. It is often said that the optimists have always been wrong. One reads in certain sections of the Press at each successive crisis of the war such sentences as, "Our optimists are behaving as fatuously as usual." No doubt they have often been mistaken. In the autumn of 1914 the optimist of the streets believed the war would be over by Christmas. And let us be just to the much-abused Mr. de la Rue, as somebody christened him. The man in the street was no more wrong than some, at any rate, of the men in the Cabinet and of the commanders in the field. All the optimists, well and ill informed, under-estimated German strength and over-estimated Russian. They under-estimated German obstinacy and German indifference to the laws of God and man; they also under-estimated the capacity of the Allies to make gigantic and very costly mistakes in

diplomacy and in military operations. The ordinary optimist, at any rate, had no conception of the difficulties of working a Grand Alliance, and could not foresee the possibility of such muddles as those which lost an army in Gallipoli, gave Bulgaria to the enemy and Serbia to destruction. In all these ways the whole clan of optimists, obscure and distinguished, were lured into that path of pleasant delusions which leads straight to the pit of disappointment. They are even at this minute perhaps—no one can be sure beforehand—under-estimating the amount of suffering which the rulers of Germany will see their soldiers and people endure before they will consent to lower the flag of their arrogance and publicly confess themselves to be in the most humiliating of all positions, that of the beaten bully.

All this is true. But what is equally true and much more rarely said is that the pessimists have certainly not been any more infallible than the optimists. Who does not remember the first days of September, 1914, when every pessimist ridiculed those who still had hopes of saving Paris? A little later they were quite sure that Ypres would go, and indeed Calais and the Channel coast; in 1915 they were certain that not only Riga but Petrograd would be occupied, and that, in fact, Russia was "finished"; when Italy came in they expected to see the Germans in Milan and Venice within three weeks, and last year they again asserted that these catastrophes were plainly on the eve of taking place;

they were sure of the fall of Verdun; sure that we could never deal with the Zeppelins (one of the more prominent printed a prophecy in 1915 that during the next six weeks we must expect Zeppelins to come every day, doing increasing damage—a period during which, as it happened, not one reached these shores); sure that we could never make an offensive on the West, sure that the submarines would prove invincible or so serious as to force on us an unsatisfactory peace. These are mistakes at least as serious as those of the optimists, so far, at any rate, as time has been able to pronounce upon them. Nor did their military misjudgments stand alone. If optimists of high financial authority can be quoted as having declared that the Germans would not be able to last out financially more than six months, expert pessimists can equally be quoted who were not deterred by the experience of two years from declaring last summer that the rate of exchange could not be maintained more than a few weeks and that a financial collapse in the autumn was inevitable. Let us hope that their patriotism is pure enough to rejoice, without any alloy of irritation at their own exposure, in the position as we see it to-day, with a steady exchange and the Chancellor of the Exchequer announcing a War Loan of over £1,000,000,000!

These are all, both optimist and pessimist, miscalculations of the intellect. But they illustrate what the philosophy of the eighteenth century tried to ignore and the newest philosophy

of our own day may tend to exaggerate—the interdependence of the intellect and the emotions. There is very rarely such a thing as a pure act of the mind. We see partly what we are looking for and believe partly what we desire. In one way, of course, this leads to constant deceptions. If a farmer chooses to put off harvesting in August because he is constitutionally incapable of believing in anything but a fine September, he is exposed to rude surprises. But then so he is if he cuts his corn before it is really ripe because he is constitutionally incapable of believing in any but a wet September. These are simply intrusions of the temperament in the sphere of the intellect, and have to be paid for. Even here the optimist has a real advantage. Both are wrong: each feels, when September comes, that he has lost a good crop which he might have had; but the one gets an August of happiness, which means more life in himself and more friendliness to others, out of his mistake; the other gets one of depression and consequent ill-temper. Still every one would admit that in this sphere the thing to aim at is to get the emotions to stand aside and let the intellect work so accurately that we form correct judgments—are, in fact, in touch with the truth.

But there are many things, and some of the most important, in which it is a gain and not a loss that the emotions, if they are of the right sort, should influence the judgment. Our hopefulness cannot affect the weather. But it can and every day does affect the actions of those about

us. The power of faith—*possunt quia posse videntur*—is not only for those who have it, but for those who see it in their friends or their leaders. It creates what it desires. If we believe every man we have to do with to be a cheat, a great many will become what we take them for. If we suspect our servants they will tend to deserve our suspicions. But if we believe in goodness we not only find it, we make it. Every soldier can tell us of the difference between the officer who believes in his men's courage and devotion and the officer who thinks they will do nothing which they are not made to do. Out of the same material the one will create a regiment of heroes, the other one of malingerers and grumblers.

It is in all these greatest things, and notably in the great worlds of art and religion, that the judgments of the intellect are most necessarily and rightly affected by the non-intellectual parts of the spirit of man. The mere intellect, alone and by itself, is totally incapable of seeing the whole of even the apparently plainest things in these spheres. What it sees by itself is a very small part, and the least essential, of the true whole, say, of a Rembrandt etching or of a collect in the Prayer-book. And so in the matter of human character. What the external judgment sees in men is that part alone which depends on the calculating intellect, the part which issues in external and measurable actions. It does not see the secret, struggling, half-conscious or subconscious emotions, the inner rebellions against

acquired habit and the pressure of environment; it is blind to the immortal spirit, which is always dying and being born again, always seeing visions and failing fully to grasp them, always moulding matter and yet wearying of the struggle with its resistance, always proving itself the power behind the visible sphere of things, yet never itself seen by any eyes except those which perceive the invisible.

And this is the real difference between the deeper sorts of optimism and pessimism. It is a difference of the spirit. Of course, in this sphere, too, there are matters in which the intellect by itself has a right to play an important part. When other people were expecting a war of three or four months it was right that Lord Kitchener should expect one of three years. Probably, though not certainly, it would have been better for the country if Mr. Asquith had expected the same. But there is another side even to that. It has been said that many men would not consent to live a day longer if they could foresee the misfortunes which would occur to them within a year. It is not certain—though we may have our private faith on the subject—that the nation would have faced the future as it did in the black autumn of 1914 if it had known how long the blackness was to last without showing a streak of dawn. Part of the function of Ministers was to keep high the courage and confidence of the nation; and it was difficult to do that unless they shared it themselves, even perhaps to a degree beyond what the cold

intellect allowed. No doubt the nation has paid a heavy price for the too easy hopefulness of Ministers. But it is fair to remember that there is, at any rate, a set-off against the loss. The serene cheerfulness of Mr. Asquith, the resolute refusal of Viscount Grey to consider the possibility of any end but that of a triumphant vindication of public right, were no small elements in the stock of national determination which has carried us through these three years of supreme trial. The nation could not have been successfully led by Ministers who were pessimists. In this great world of politics as in the small world of private life cheerfulness makes for vitality, while the tendency to dwell on and anticipate misfortunes makes for depression and weakness. Which is the better member of a family, one who thinks and talks only of what has gone well with family affairs in the past and by temperament expects things also to go well in the future, or one who dwells only on gloom, foresees it and gloats over it? The answer is plain. Both may be equally far from including the whole truth, but the one has the half which makes for life and the other the half which, by itself, makes for death. By the one the family life is cheered and strengthened; by the other its energy is sapped and its courage destroyed.

But the difference is much profounder than this. The reason why the pessimist is a curse to his country is not because he is often wrong in his calculations; it is not even because he depresses our spirits and lowers our power to

face out task; it is because he believes neither in God nor in man. That may seem a hard saying. But, *so far as he is a pessimist*, it is true. It may not be necessary for everybody who believes in God to believe with Browning's Pippa that because "God's in His Heaven" therefore here and now "all's right with the world." But it is certain that such a man will believe that all is at least in process and possibility of being put right; and that that process has begun now and is constantly at work. A man may believe that in another world all will be made right. But that is really believing only in a future God. He may live a sincerely good life of obedience to this future God; but that seems to be believing only in a God who will ultimately judge, not in One who is now transforming and converting the world. And no isolated texts in the New Testament will prevent the faith of mankind, and especially of Christendom, from believing more and more that God is leading His world slowly but steadily upwards, and that each generation or each century, gaining on one side, losing on another, does on the whole make a slowly mounting balance of progress towards the life that God meant man to live. That this faith is justified seems certain. In matters of art, indeed, and of the pure intellect progress is doubtful or invisible, unless ten mediocrities are to be held the equivalent of one creative genius. But in the sphere of morals, generally though quite wrongly supposed to be the sole interest of the Divine Will, who can

doubt the progress of the world? To take a single small field of morals, who can doubt, in spite of the constant tirades against luxury and selfishness which have been equally loud in every preceding age, especially those now exalted for their supposed simplicity of life, that there were in England in 1913 at least a hundred times as many people freely giving of their leisure, wealth, and education for the service of others as there were a century earlier? Of course there is much culpable selfishness to-day, but the more important point is that there is less selfishness and more public service than ever before. So, too, about the war itself. It is not merely the advance of science; it is the increased strength of the humane will that makes the lot of the wounded to-day so immeasurably less painful than it was in the wars of Marlborough or Wellington. The conduct of Germany in Belgium and elsewhere, abominable as it seems to us, and indeed is, is only abominable in comparison with the practice of the civilised world for the last few centuries. The lot of the Belgians compared with that of the victims of Attila or Timur—to say nothing of more ancient conquerors—is almost a fortunate one. The crime of the Germans lies precisely there. They have sinned against the light; they have tried to set back the progress of centuries. The surprise and indignation which they have aroused is the measure of the world's progress, and may be strong enough to prove in future its safeguard.

Not to believe in this progress, as a moral

certainty, an *a priori* act of faith, is the pessimist's lie in the soul. It is what makes him always so fatal a presence, each in his own circle. It is worst, and unfortunately commonest, when it arises from a lack of any faith in spirit at all. Many people must have noticed that at the beginning of the war all the people who believed in men were optimists, and most of those who believed in machines were pessimists. All the materialists, all the people who regard mechanical inventions as important landmarks in human history, all who think that the progress of humanity may be measured in the scales that deal with rapidity of movement, command over sea and air, or similar matters, either were or tended to be pessimists. They were obsessed by the amazingly victorious march of German materialism since 1870, and, knowing nothing of the spirit of man, they believed that nothing could resist a force so visible, tangible, entirely undeniable. On the other hand, those who believed, as especially in Russia, in man's soul, or, as especially in France, in his mind, or, as especially in England, in his character, stood firm and undaunted in the worst days in face of all the victories of Krupp. They had a faith that there was something greater and more invincible in man than was dreamt of in Krupp's philosophy. They were the real optimists; not those who built on a doubtful calculation of the chances of battle, but those who built on the moral nature of man. It is quite true that in history they have not always proved right. The

death-dealing passage of Timur over some of the fairest parts of the human heritage, the fatal victories of the barbarous Ottoman over Greek, Roman, Arab, and Christian civilisation, were set-backs to progress and obstacles to faith in it as great as, or greater than, a victory of the new barbarians would be. But between the struggle against old scourges of humanity and that against the enemy of to-day there is a difference as well as a similarity. The victory of the new would be like the victory of the old in being one of robbers and barbarians over a higher civilisation. The course of the war has proved to all the world, what acute observers had always known, that the Prussian, in spite of his organised and somewhat mechanical learning, still exhibits the plainest traces of the unfortunate fact that he has never experienced either of the two great disciplines which are the sources of European civilisation. No Roman rulers ever taught him the laws, the manners, or the wisdom of the ancient world; and of Rome's later lesson, that of Christianity, he knew nothing till it had lost much of its original vitality and become—what with him it remains—a matter of politics rather than of religion. His victory, then, would be as fatal to Western Europe as the victory of the Turk was to Eastern. But there are differences too; and the important one is that the barbarian who to-day desires to overrun the world has not found, and will not find, what his predecessors found—a succession of victims divided and scattered, without organisation or alliance, and,

what is far more important, without virility, spirit, or faith. The defenders of the ancient polity of Europe have proved themselves in no way the inferiors of its enemy, except in the matter of preparation against a crime in which they could not bring themselves to believe. In all the higher human qualities—in courage and self-sacrifice, in quickness of intellect and in wisdom and exaltation of spirit, in an unshaken union which has resisted all disasters and all temptations, and in unquenchable faith in the certainty of ultimate victory—they have been, in spite of far greater difficulties, not only equal to the Germans, but in most cases far above them, on an altogether higher plane. Nothing could be less like the nations which proved such easy prey for Tartars and Ottomans than this Allied Europe of to-day. In this lies a reasoned justification for the optimist.

But it is not his highest justification. That lies elsewhere. Faith and freedom may not organise thamselves for war so easily as bureaucratic materialism, but they have in them a vitality of which it knows nothing. It would be false to say that they cannot be defeated. They have been defeated before and may be again, in ways and for reasons inscrutable to us who live in a universe, material and moral, of which we see only the tiniest fraction. But what we do see, what faith sees for herself beyond experience, what freedom finds in her own heart, is that they, and such as they, are powers of life because they are powers of the spirit ; and that tyranny and

materialism have in them something " akin," as Wordsworth said of riches,

To fear, to change, to cowardice, and death.

To deny that is to deny the spirit itself; and that is the unforgivable sin of the pessimist. To believe it is the joy of the optimist and his best service to his country.

X

THEN AND NOW*

THERE are striking differences between the war we are now waging and that of a hundred years ago. This is much more of a war of the whole world than that was, for one thing; it can scarcely fail to be very much shorter, for another. And of course there are many other points of contrast. But the more one goes behind surface characteristics, the more one looks into the essential meaning of the two, the more one is struck not with contrasts but with resemblances. The true war aims for which we continued that war for twenty years are exactly the same as those for which we shall, if need be, continue this for as many. We fought then and we fight now primarily for the "security" of Pitt's famous speech and the "liberty" of Wordsworth's great sonnets. *Post hoc, ergo propter hoc* is the hardiest of all fallacies, and there are still ignorant people who, because the war ended in the return of Louis XVIII., say and write that we fought it to restore the Bourbons. Of course the truth is that, as is well known, Pitt refused to interfere with the Revolution so long as it did not interfere with us; and throughout the war, in spite

* *Times* Literary Supplement, January 10, 1918.

of Burke, nobody but a few sentimentalists cared a farthing about restoring the Bourbons, whom we had no reason to love or even respect. Louis XVIII. was restored because to the French themselves, as well as to the allied Sovereigns who had to find a government for France, he seemed the least objectionable of the few possible solutions of a very difficult problem. And to those most self-contradictory of men, the champions of freedom who worship at the shrine of Napoleon and complain of the Restoration, one answer is sufficient and crushing: France enjoyed fifty times as much of political and personal liberty between 1815 and 1825 as she enjoyed between 1800 and 1815.

The truth, then, plainly is that in that struggle, as in this, our predominant motives were the security of ourselves and of Europe against the establishment of a universal military despotism. and the defence of that political and national liberty of which England had been the first to set the example on a large scale. No doubt the parallel is closer in the first point than in the second. In that, indeed, the wars of Elizabeth with Philip II., of William III. and Anne with Louis XIV., of the English aristocracy of a hundred years ago with Napoleon, of the English democracy of to-day with the German Emperor, are simply successive phases of the same struggle. Much nonsense has been talked during the last three years about the " balance of power " which appears to be a sort of political red rag to certain people, especially those who understand very

little about it. But if every country in Europe became a pure democracy to-morrow, nay, if the Society of Nations were established, as all that is best among the Allies hopes it will be, neither of these things would undo the truth of the doctrine of the balance of power. The essential part of that doctrine is that the whole of Europe is unsafe if a single Power is strong and aggressive enough to contemplate establishing ascendancy over all the rest. That is equally true whether the Power is Spain, or France, or Germany. And it would be just as true, or even truer, in a Europe joined together in a Society of Nations as it is in one of absolutely distinct States. A Society of Nations of which Louis XIV. or Napoleon was a member would obviously be a mere scrap of paper. And so still more would one be of which an undefeated and unregenerate Germany was a member. The balance of power does not mean that every single member of the family of Europe is to weigh exactly the same number of ounces in some nicely adjusted political scales. There is no reason why it should mean, as it has sometimes been made to mean, that what any Power loses in one place is to be made up to it in another. The essential part of it has nothing to do with the family solicitor, mutual compensation, exchange of properties point of view which played too large a part at the Congress of Vienna. The vital thing in it is quite distinct from all that. It is that Europe is a family whose members are of unequal age, size, and importance, but have one

interest in common, which is that no one of them shall have either the will or the power to erect for himself a tyranny over the rest. That is what France twice tried to do, and what Germany has been trying to do ever since 1870: what we prevented France from doing and must prevent Germany from doing if the world is to be made ready for a Society of Nations.

The truth is that a healthy balance of power is the first condition for the establishment of such a society. And such a balance is at this moment threatened by Germany, and by Germany alone. The war has brought great inconveniences and even sufferings to the small neutral nations, and the immediate cause of some of this suffering is the blockade policy of the Allies. But neither before the war began nor since has any intelligent person in Scandinavia or Holland, or Belgium, or Switzerland had the smallest fear of any interference with the independence of his country on the part of France or England. Exactly the opposite, and with very good reason, was the case with reference to Germany. In Belgium and Holland, in Denmark and Sweden and Norway, in Switzerland, in the Balkans, many intelligent persons had their fears of the Central Empires. They knew that the two Emperors were masters of by far the strongest military force in Europe, and that many of the most popular and influential voices in Germany had proclaimed designs for the future which quite undisguisedly involved the destruction of the independence of all the

smaller nations, and even threatened to reduce France and England to a position of impotence. No one could then or now quote any influential voice in France or England which advocated interference with any nation's independence. It is true that in Sweden and the Balkans some fears of Russia were mingled with those of Germany. Dislike of the old Russia is easy enough to explain; fear less easy. For in a succession of wars, with France and England in 1855, with Turkey twenty years later, and more lately still with Japan, she had shown that, while too immense for real defeat, she is too clumsy, too backward, too stupid for successful aggression. How long did it take her to defeat so weak a Power as Turkey? How could any Swede suppose that she could successfully interfere in Scandinavia, any attack on which was certain to bring in Germany to the support of the victim, while it was almost certain that the aggressor would not have the support of France? Even in such a case the wise Scandinavian had more fear of the German protector than of the Russian enemy, if such there should be. But in any case fear of Russia is now a thing of the past. The madmen who have made themselves her masters have chosen to expunge their country from the list of the Powers of Europe, and even if sane men should soon succeed them it will take them long to restore her to her place. They will be only too fully occupied with the disastrous legacy of almost insoluble problems bequeathed to them by the tyranny, corruption,

and incompetence of the old Russia and the lawless insanity of the new. Russia then being written off, and America with her disinterested idealism having come in, it is plain that no sane citizen of any neutral country can have any fears of any danger whatever from the decisive victory of the Allies, while he must view with apprehension and misgiving anything short of a real defeat of Germany.

For these reasons we may say with confidence that now, as a hundred years ago, we are fighting for the security not only of ourselves but of Europe. And if, now as then, we are fighting for security, so now, even more than then, we are fighting for liberty. It is still a parallel, not a contrast. Then as now our cause was, as Wordsworth knew, the cause of freedom. And that was essentially true from the first, in spite of the genuine enthusiasm for the cause of liberty of the young French Revolution. We did not fight the Revolution, in spite of many and very grave provocations, till, after occupying Belgium, France threatened Holland directly and ourselves indirectly by setting aside the very recent treaty about the Scheldt. We had entirely refused to support the German invasion of France in the supposed interest of Louis XVI., or to interfere in any way in the internal affairs of France. But then as now the independence of the Low Countries was a subject of legitimate British interest. Even so, it was the French and not we who made the actual declaration of war. But no doubt the firm language of Pitt in the dispatch of

December 31, 1792 (language which might have been used by Mr. Asquith with hardly an alteration in August, 1914, to Germany), made war almost inevitable with a Power which was not only intoxicated with victory, but openly aspiring to impose on the whole world a kind of despotism of freedom in the interest and under the tutelage of France. These are some of Pitt's words :—

England will never consent that France shall arrogate the power of annulling at her pleasure and under the pretence of a pretended natural right of which she makes herself the sole judge, the political system of Europe established by solemn treaties. . . . If France is really desirous of maintaining peace and friendship with England she must show herself disposed to renounce her views of aggression and aggrandizement and confine herself within her own territory without insulting other Governments, without disturbing their tranquillity, and without violating their rights.

This was the language of good sense and right; and, more than that, then as now, it stated the only principles on which the freedom of Europe, and especially of the smaller States, could be safe. But though this is true, and though a war based on these principles was in fact a war for freedom as well as for right, yet this did not become clear at once. During some years of the struggle everything that was most liberal in Europe was French in sympathy, while we had, as our damaging Allies, the old dynasties bolstered up by all the forces of reaction and

stupidity. It was not, as "The Convention of Cintra" shows with immortal wisdom and eloquence, till we threw ourselves whole-heartedly into the support of Spain and Portugal in their struggle for freedom and nationality against a foreign tyrant that we began to make clear either to ourselves or to others what had really been true all along, that we were fighting the cause of the freedom of the peoples of Europe against the threat of a universal military despotism which cared nothing whatever either for nationality or for freedom.

We did not gain more than a part of that high object. Partly by our own fault, and still more by that of our Allies, our victory did not result in more than a very partial satisfaction of the double ideal of nationality and freedom. It was natural and right that we should care more about security than about either; for without the "security" which Waterloo sealed for forty years neither nationality nor freedom would have had a chance. But if our statesmen had cared more, and if those of the Continent had cared at all, for nationality and freedom, more could have been done for both. As it was, the first was partially secured, and a few foundations laid for the second. The great gain was that the universal tyranny and brigandage of Napoleon was swept away. Bad as the Governments of Austria, Prussia, Spain might be, they were at least Austrian, Prussian, and Spanish, and men so greatly prefer national government to foreign that they have generally been more

content to be misgoverned by a native King than well governed by any alien authority. All that was pure gain even if the motive of it was mainly dynastic interest and only to a small extent national feeling; and neither Italy nor Belgium nor Poland could alter the fact that the political map of Europe in 1816 represented the feelings of its peoples much better than it had done five years before. Little was done directly for freedom outside France, where a Parliamentary system under a well-meaning Sovereign replaced the naked despotism of the sword of Napoleon. But the France of 1789 and even Napoleon himself in his earlier phase had unloosed a spirit of liberty which neither their own armies nor Metternich's spies and gaolers could destroy. And the victory of the Allies, which gave so very little directly to that spirit, gave it everything indirectly by giving it the two things indispensable for its further development, the two things it could never hope for while Napoleon reigned—the recognition of a sense of nationality and security from external attack.

To-day we have to go farther, much farther, than the men of 1815 either could go or had any desire to go. But first of all we have to win the victory they won without which they could have done nothing. We have to go through the difficulties and disappointments which they had gone through. Once more, though in a different way—

> the firm Russian's purpose brave
> Is bartered by a timorous slave.

Russia seems to be failing us to-day as she failed us for a time a hundred years ago. But as despots disappear or change their minds, so the present rulers of Russia may give place to others, or may possibly even discover the truth that the Western Powers are the natural and sincere friends of free Russia and Imperial Germany her natural enemy. Perhaps they may also learn that democracy cannot be established by throwing away the two things which, as we have just been seeing, 1815 won for it and without which it could never have come into being. The people of Russia, it is certain, will neither win freedom for themselves nor assist in winning freedom for others by exposing Russia to the easy invasion of a foreign Emperor's army nor by substituting an empty and barren internationalism for the true spirit of national life, growth, and freedom. Nor are general pillage and the repudiation of all engagements, domestic and foreign, likely to prove a foundation on which anything very lasting can be built.

But the failure of Russia leaves us with other Allies, both sane and free, who will not fail; a happy contrast to the position of a hundred years ago, when we were left for some while alone; as Wordsworth said,

> The last that dare to struggle with the foe.

Those Allies are all of one mind with us, set on one high purpose, joined together in a unity of spirit of an order such as never existed in the alliances against Napoleon. Our spirit is higher

because our purpose is greater. We have not merely inherited their partially conceived goal of national integrity and independence. We have carried it much farther. We ask for a reorganization of Europe based upon the true principles of freedom and nationality. It seems to be supposed in some quarters that the principle of self-determination of the peoples was invented by the Russian Revolution. On the contrary, it has been implied from the beginning in the whole policy of the Allies, though not, it must be admitted, always maintained with absolute consistency. It is just a year ago, and therefore long before the Russian Revolution, that the Allies in their reply to President Wilson defined their object as

> the reorganisation of Europe guaranteed by a stable *régime* and based at once on respect for nationalities and on the right to full security and liberty of economic development possessed by all peoples, small and great.

This, especially coupled with the illustrations which immediately follow, implies the whole doctrine of nationality and self-determination. But there seems to be no reason why we should not now cut away all possibility of misunderstanding between ourselves and the honest idealism of Russia by declaring that we accept the principle of self-determination absolutely and immediately as to Europe (in proof of which we may cite our action at this moment in Ireland), and that we recognise it, as our public actions in

recent years show, as the goal which we aim at attaining in Asia and even in the Mahomedan and more advanced parts of Africa. Of course this could only be done in agreement with our Allies ; but if they consented the joint declaration would be at once a challenge to which the despotic Empires could give no reply and the charter of a new world to be constituted after our victory.

That victory is not yet achieved. We have to render William II. as harmless as Napoleon ; we have to convince Germany as we convinced France that Europe is not one despotism, but many free States. The condition of that is nothing less than victory. Now as then, victory is the only pledge of freedom or of nationality or of peace. Professor Firth, in his admirable Creighton Lecture (" Then and Now " ; Macmillan, 1*s*.), reinforces with his great authority much of what has been said here. In particular his last words insist on this need of enduring till the goal of victory has been attained. The men of a hundred years ago, he says—

> were tried by fiercer extremes of good and evil fortune than we have known, the burdens and perils we have borne for three years they endured for seven times as many, and did not lay down their arms till they had attained the ends they fought for. Here it will be enough for us to equal them.

Will the democracy fail to fight its own battle as perseveringly as the aristocracy fought what was partly the same battle a hundred years ago ? If it does so fail the cause of European freedom

will probably be lost for several generations, for without England, now as then, it cannot be saved. And for that failure the English democracy will have no excuse. Its sufferings to-day, the sufferings of those who remain at home, are as nothing compared with those of the men of 1810, who were tortured at once by unemployment, high taxation, and something like famine. To-day, as the Prime Minister has said, there is less starvation in England than there was before the war, there is an unprecedented abundance of very highly paid employment, and nearly the whole of the war taxation is borne by the well-to-do classes. But for better reasons than these, for Wordsworth's reasons, we will not believe that the people of England will faint or fail.

"All the croakers are in England," wrote a soldier in the Peninsula to his mother in 1812. That is true still But it is not true that all in England are croakers. Still, there are too many of them, and they are the danger of the moment. Curiously enough, Mr. Firth quotes Sydney Smith, a Canon of St. Paul's, as one of the worst. He was quite sure in 1807 that success in the war was impossible; that our blockade was useless, and invasion both likely to come and sure to be successful. And he felt no shame in publishing these opinions. Another wiseacre, Francis Horner, who also has his successors to-day, thought that an army at home such as the Government desired to raise "would only be a less evil than conquest by a foreign invader!" Moreover, there were then traitors in high

places, very different from our petty and obscure practisers in treason, men who actually and openly desired the success of the enemy, even so late as 1813, as the Granville memoirs show. The spirit of England was besieged, as Mr. Firth says, by "armies of Doubters, Doubters of every breed." But the fortress was not taken then, and it will not be taken now. But if it is to be safe it must resolutely refuse all parleying with the enemy which involves any lowering of its flag. No good came of the Peace of Amiens in 1802, and no good will come now of any peace which leaves Germany undefeated, unrepentant, and still in the hands of those whose policy of insolence and violence stands confessed to the whole world. Happily ὕβρις usually refuses the most tempting opportunities of escaping its doom. But we must not rely upon the Germans being as arrogantly blind to their own interests as Napoleon showed himself in the winter of 1813–14 during the foolish negotiations of Frankfort and Chatillon. We must go through to the end and insist even more firmly on our higher and larger principles than the men of 1814 did on their primary needs of security and independence. So, and so only, acting definitely on principle, declining any huckstering, insisting on a peace of right, no more and no less, shall we rise to the height of the ultimate call made upon us.

It is true that even while we use such words, even while we pledge ourselves to respond to the full call, every thinking man among us is

conscious of the tremendous difficulties which lie ahead—difficulties which appear impossibilities in the eyes of many who are certainly not fools and have not commonly been thought of as cowards: he is conscious, too, that he is using words too high for him, words which, like all the best used by religion, like the language put into our mouths by the Prayer-book, are altogether above his habitual self and to which he will certainly not be always able to keep faithful. But, here as elsewhere, it is best not to be afraid of thoughts that are too great for us. Above all, in matters of the will the conquering words are such as *possunt quia posse videntur*, *credo quia impossibile*. Faith may fail, as Peter's did, but none the less, Peter was the better, not the worse, for having made his great profession. And so, even if we shrink back, as he did, and as each of us only too probably will, before some sacrifice that seems too hard to bear, we shall still be the better for having seen the vision and embraced it, and shall be the more likely to recover from the fall.

XI

POLITICAL PROPHECIES *

ARISTOTLE said that the life of contemplation was higher and more desirable than the life of action. But he has had few English disciples. Give an English student the chance of becoming a Civil servant, the chairman of a company, or even the chairman of a committee, and, as Mark Pattison said in another connexion, he eagerly "issues at dawn from his chamber and his books." And if you give him the chance of becoming a Cabinet Minister he naturally issues from them at cock-crow. Mr. Fisher was a historian. He gave us several admirable volumes and at least one that was brilliant and delightful. He never gave us the great work which readers of history were hoping to get from him. But he was comparatively young, and if time was going on, so, no doubt, were his accumulations and preparations. And then the whirlpool caught him and sucked him in. First the administration of a young university, a more complicated and exacting occupation than the chairmanship of a great railway; and then a great Office of State, the House of Commons, and all that they involve of serious and absorbing work and, alas! also of

* *Times* Literary Supplement, March 6, 1919.

idle functions and the hearing and making of unnecessary speeches. Clearly there is no more historical hope now of Mr. Fisher than there was of Stubbs and Creighton after they became Bishops; and Clio has to weep over another lost disciple. But perhaps his case is not quite so bad as theirs. For the Church never surrenders its prey except to death or dotage; while Sir George Trevelyan is one of several examples which show that the State is not always so tenacious or perhaps so faithful.

Meanwhile this little pamphlet,* a mere lecture, shows us something of what we have lost. It is typically English: a house of many windows looking in all directions and commanding pleasant prospects. There is no pedantry, no sign of specialism, no confinement to a period. It covers a wide country; touches on Greek, Latin, French, American history as easily as on English, and exhibits the English characteristic of an obvious interest in ethics and practice. The influence of Oxford may be seen in the fact that the learning is always harnessed to the service of ideas, and perhaps the influence of Paris, whither Mr. Fisher proceeded after Oxford, in the lucidity with which both learning and ideas are presented.

What does it all come to? Mr. George Trevelyan, in his "Clio," says, broadly, "History

* "Political Prophecies: An Address to the Edinburgh Philosophical Society delivered November 5, 1918, by the Right Hon. H. A. L. Fisher, M.P." (Clarendon Press. 1s. net.)

cannot prophesy the future." What it can do, he adds, is a thing at once less and greater than this. "It can mould the mind itself into the capability of understanding great affairs and sympathising with other men." This widening of sympathy, of course, makes a man a better, a somewhat less fallible, judge of the affairs of his own day, many of which must be to every man, alien, dark and difficult, till he has made one of those journeys outside himself which are among the best results of intelligent reading. Even so the benefit is not direct, not a thing which can be measured and defined. What is gained from reading history is not a science or even an art that can be applied to practice as you may use arithmetic to make up your accounts, or play the piano as soon as you have been taught. Indeed, Mr. Trevelyan goes so far as to say that history "has no practical utility." But what he probably means is that its use, like that of art, poetry and religion, is one that cannot be separated from its experience. It is not like the discovery of the electric light or the telephone, which, once worked out by a man of science, can be used by anybody. History, like poetry, possesses a man rather than is possessed by him; what he gains by it is not a handy key to contemporary politics, nor any pocket possession of any kind, but an enlarged mind and a quickened imagination. The change that follows from it is a change not in what he has got, but in what he is.

Perhaps this is the reason why so very few of the host of successful and unsuccessful prophets

brought before us by Mr. Fisher's omniscience are historians. Never prophesy unless you know, was a cynic's warning. But it may be that an historian would complete it by " and if you know you'll never wish to." That is, when once you have realised how infinitely complicated human affairs are, how entirely dependent upon the most varied and incalculable of all forces, human nature, you will know that prophecy is too risky a business to enter upon. Mr. Fisher, who is an optimist, is inclined to encourage the prophets as well as other people. He says that the machinery which they work with has been vastly improved since the French Revolution. He notes with just complacency the improvement of our statistics, our increased knowledge of birth rates, trade figures and the like; and our capacity to estimate with tolerable accuracy the probable duration of the mines which play such an important part in the life of modern states. Whether, as he adds, " the influence of the public press and democratic institutions have given us a more perfected and better schooled habit of political calculation " is less certain. And in any case how far do these new factors carry the political prophet? After all, the last word is always with man himself, not with coal mines or harbours or fertile soils. Why is Glasgow, why still more are Liverpool and Bristol great ports while Cork and Limerick are very small ones? Because of some calculable causes no doubt, but most of all because of the incalculable differences between the races which

inhabit the two islands. Why is Spain a poor country? Not because it lacks minerals or other natural advantages, but because the Spaniards are the Spaniards. Why has Asia Minor, once the flowering home of all the famour cities sung by Catullus and visited by St. Paul, been for many centuries a desert of poverty? Because the Turks are neither rich in themselves nor the cause of riches in other men. But till you knew the Turk you could not prophesy the misery of his dominions; and though it is probably safe to bet against the Turk's improvement, it would even now be rash to make sure that the Spaniard and the Irishman are incapable of achieving political intelligence or economic success. So dark and difficult are the paths of the prophet.

Yet they might be primrose paths to judge by the number of those whom Mr. Fisher shows us walking in them. They are a distinguished company, the unsuccessful as well as the successful. First of all there are those who failed to prophesy when they seem to us to have had every opportunity. Aristotle, who lived with Alexander and yet never divined the coming of the Nation State; Franklin, Frederick the Great, and Madame Roland, who had so much interest in foreseeing the French Revolution and such opportunities for doing so and yet foresaw nothing; the German General Staff, and indeed, all the soldiers of all nations, who left it to a Polish banker to divine that the great war when it came would be a war of trenches. Then there

are those who did prophesy and whose shades must wish they had not; Rousseau, Joseph II., Catherine II. and Frederick the Great, who all declared that England's day of greatness was passed for ever; Lord Morley, who, happily being without a shade as yet, must do his own business of regretting his declaration that Australians would never be reconciled to paying for a war undertaken for the defence of Belgian neutrality; two Prime Ministers and an editor of *The Times*—Palmerston, Disraeli and Delane—who were all quite sure the French would beat the Germans; and a third, Lord Salisbury, who in 1860 was quite certain that Germany would never be united. Then there are the successful prophets. It may be noted that all are men of letters, only one a politician, while only two are professed historians and their prophecies are the least remarkable of all. They are Polybius, who prophesied that luxury and success would ultimately destroy the Roman Empire, and Hume, who told Gibbon that the English language would soon provide a larger public than the French. Then there is Heine, who warned the French that the old heathen gods of Germany would one day rise from their graves to the discomfort of Christianity and civilisation. A higher level is reached, perhaps, by Renan, who foresaw that England would soon be France's ally against Germany; certainly by Montesquieu, who prophesied the revolt of the American colonies, and still more by Wordsworth, who saw from the first the doom of

French Imperialism in the national uprising of Spain. The highest level of all is of course reached by Burke, who saw that the French Revolution was an armed doctrine and could not be confined to France, but unless defeated must spread all over Europe; who foresaw the effect of the civil constitution of the clergy and prophesied the military despotism of Napoleon.

We are again living in an hour which sees the floodgates laid open. And naturally the prophets have not been able to resist temptation. When the Bolshevists made their revolution, good judges gave them a few days, some a few weeks, some a few months. They have already lasted over a year and a quarter. Last November, a few days before the German Revolution, there appeared in one of our best reviews an article by a high authority declaring that the German sovereigns were perfectly safe on their thrones. On the other hand, it has been freely predicted for the last two years that the General Elections of all countries when they came would result in sweeping victories for the Extremists of the Left. Elections have now been held in Spain, Norway, the United States, England and Germany; and the one common feature which they exhibit is the defeat of extreme socialist or revolutionary candidates. So we have the Dean of St. Paul's, not content to confine himself to wise warnings about the importance of quality in additions to the birth rate, but rashly hurrying on, undeterred by the fate of Malthus, to declare that every baby

born can only make a place for itself by extinguishing another, and to assume that the world's supplies of food and other commodities have reached their final level; as if the increased rate of production during the last hundred years had not again and again shown itself capable of utterly outdistancing population and reducing Malthus and the Malthusians to confusion. For such revivals of refuted prophecy there seems no excuse. More easily excused is the prophecy, so commonly made to-day, that Germany is now having her Kerensky and will presently have her Lenin and Trotsky. But this seems to be the sort of mistake which always comes of fancying that history repeats itself. In England there was a Parliamentary revolution, a military despotism, a Restoration, an abdication, and a re-settlement of the Monarchy in a younger branch of the Royal family on a liberal and constitutional basis. So in France there were the Estates General and the various Parliamentary forms of Government that filled the first years of the Revolution; then Napoleon; then the Bourbons again, and then their abdication. And when Louis Philippe appeared on the throne, as the Citizen King, rash people said, "It is English history over again; the problem is solved; and the House of Orleans will last as long as the House of Hanover." But it lasted eighteen years. So Germany is not Russia, and Herr Ebert has already shown that he is not M. Kerensky; and it would be foolish to suppose that what happened in the one case must happen

in the other. It may. In favour of its doing so is the apparent law that the downward course of revolution is seldom arrested till it reaches the bottom, finds it very hard, and rebounds; in favour of its not doing so is the truth that the Germans, unlike the Russians, are an extremely industrial and materialistic people, and that, whatever the Russians might imagine when they acquiesced in Bolshevism, the Germans at any rate know from the Russian example that it spells universal ruin.

Anyhow, if prophecies are to be made they must be made not on superficial parallels such as that between Louis XVIII., followed by Louis Philippe, and Charles II. followed by William III., or that, if there be one, between Kerensky and Ebert; but, as Burke made his, on a consideration of the profounder causes of political changes. And as we cannot but speculate on the future, which is of such great interest and vast importance to us, prophets there will always be. Even those who are most conscious that they are not Burkes cannot help looking round at this smoking cauldron of the world and asking what feast of the future it is cooking for us. And from that it is an easy step to making guesses at the answer. An anonymous prophet at any rate prophesies on a pleasant system of limited liability; for though time may prove his guesses wrong, it cannot get at him to cover him with the ridicule which he may deserve. Such a prophet may venture where a statesman and historian like Mr. Fisher must keep silence. Even he perhaps

will be wise to cast his prophecies into the form of queries which people may put to themselves when they are speculating on what may happen in the immediate or more remote future. He may ask, for instance, whether it is not so probable as to be almost certain that an extremely illiterate, almost entirely agricultural, half-Oriental people, like the Russians, into every fibre of whose inherited being are interwoven the threads not only of religion, mysticism, superstition, call it what you will, but of a personal monarchy, will return to both in one form or another, before very long. The Monarchy and the Church of the future may be, almost certainly will be, very different from those of the past: but the Russian people will not always lie dead: they can only come to life again by something that moves their imagination: and that can only be something large and simple and picturesque, something for which the history and instincts of a primitive people are a preparation and a call: and, if so, what is there but some kind of Monarchy and some kind of Church, a vision real or unreal of loyalty, love and faith directed towards some holy and distant God in Heaven and some personal and visible substitute for Him on earth?

So, again, with the great question of the future of democracy. Everybody is hoping to-day that the era of irresponsible and arbitrary governments is over. The world is to be made safe for democracy. And so much we may hope with confident assurance. Both the faith and hope

of the whole world at this moment, and its material power, are overwhelmingly on the side of democracy. It is certain of being given a fair chance, and the probabilities seem in favour of its successful survival. Things look as if it might at last succeed in showing that peoples can continue for more than a moment to govern themselves as efficiently and as justly as one or more men arbitrarily chosen for them by the accident of birth. But our anonymous questioner, who on the whole believes in this prophecy, may ask whether there is enough realisation in the minds of democratic leaders of the conditions on which success depends. Do they remember how short and troubled the life of democracy has commonly been compared with that of monarchy and aristocracy; how very rapidly, as a rule, it has rushed through extravagance and excess to suicide? Are they remembering how very few people care seriously, ever have cared or ever will, about political forms, and how many care about a quiet life and being able to carry on their own daily business without interference? Are they forgetting, especially the Socialists among them, that man does not live by trade alone, and still less by municipal government, main drainage and perpetual bureaucratic inspection? Are they vainly imagining, like that remarkable man the late Sergeant-Major Keeling, that in the days to come a history of main drainage will be found more interesting than the story of Crecy? If so, they are driving their ship straight on to the rocks, for men are not so dull

as that. Probably, Mr. Keeling, who learnt so many things during his years in the army (learnt, for instance, so much of the wastefulness of State management that it very considerably modified his Socialism), discovered before his death in the field that the ideal life is not so drab a thing as the Fabian Society imagines, and that wife and child, yes and country also, have a power of stirring human emotions which will not be reached by district councils, trade unions or limited companies, till they have won it by a thousand years of generous and passionate appeal to higher interests than those of health or housing, wages or wealth. And if democratic leaders do not make the same discovery, if they imagine that for an Englishman any International can ever replace England, any State supersede the family, or any philosophy supersede religion it is safe to prophesy that they will not lead very long or very far. And this is no more true of England than of any other country. Abstract argument, however powerful, can never do more than educate and gradually transform custom; it can never dethrone her. She sits at the centre of political life, unconscious of her slow but never-ceasing transformations, the perpetual guardian of its unity, continuity and strength.

But an anonymous prophet must remember that it is characteristic of prophets to take themselves over-seriously, and must not rely so much on his anonymity as to venture on usurping the functions of the preacher.

XII

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL *

We live in an age of Internationalism, not realised to any great extent but at least discussed, desired and attempted. It is true that the greatest of all Internationals issues weakened and discredited from the war. The Vatican in 1914, not for the first time, preferred politics to ethics, and expediency, or what ignorance thought to be expedient, to right, and is beginning the payment of a penalty which will not be discharged in our time or that of our sons. It was easy, convenient, and profitable to sell indulgences in the Middle Ages, but the penalty for doing so was the loss of all Northern Europe and the end of a United European Church. That penalty is still being paid to-day, and there is no likelihood of its being remitted. So it was convenient to lean on the support of Austria and Germany in peace and to refuse to condemn them either for turning peace into war or for turning war into hell, and that at the immediate expense of an admittedly innocent and most Catholic people. But the penalty is the scorn of men of the world, the sorrow of the good, and the wide recognition

* *Times* Literary Supplement, April 17, 1919.

that the Church lost in 1914 the greatest chance which ever came to her of recovering the moral authority she enjoyed in the early Middle Age. The hope which some cherished of living to see a revival of the most august of Internationals must be abandoned. The Roman claim to a world-wide spiritual authority was judged and found wanting when Belgium appealed in vain to Rome to pronounce judgment on her oppressors.

But the Church has two immense advantages over the younger Internationals. Indeed, she has a third which this is not the place to discuss. So long as she produces Saints, as she certainly does, so long, that is, as the love of Christ is seen visibly working in her, she is indestructible and eternal. But putting this supreme advantage aside she has two others of overwhelming importance. She is the oldest political institution in the world, and one of the best organised. Now, the two greatest forces in politics are first, history—that is, custom—the prestige of established order and long descent; and, secondly, organisation, that is, a "cadre" to work in—a machine to work by. The spirit of man, and the ideas which set it on fire, are no doubt a much higher force than either, and are irresistible in their hour of energy. But such hours are rare: and history shows custom and organisation again and again defeating, without any kind of compromise or concession, the insurgent assaults of young ideas: while ideas have seldom or never triumphed over custom and order without submitting to be fitted, more or less, into the

established scheme of things. In politics at least, new wine is seldom palatable unless it comes from old bottles. The most successful of popular Governments, that of England, still works through monarchical and aristocratic forms: the most august of all monarchies, the imperial sovereignty of the Cæsars, preserved for centuries many of the forms of the Roman Republic, and retained to the last the use of the almost mystic letters S.P.Q.R.

These forces of history and of a working machine the universal international Church has, and her young rivals have not. What have they in their favour? What is bringing them to birth? First of all the very force which has greatly weakened the Church; the fact that the war took place at all and the horrors which have marked it. The Church loses by its identification with the old system of things; by its share in the general failure of that system to prevent the war and by its own special failure in its own province, its refusal of its own office as the champion of right against wrong. The League of Nations and the attempts at an international organisation of Labour are a revolt against the war and the system which allowed it to come about. It is true that both existed in some sort before the war, and both deeply disappointed the hopes which had been founded on them. The Hague Conference and all that gathered round it had done admirable work in creating a spirit of willingness to submit quarrels to arbitration, and had probably saved the world from

more than one war. It would no doubt have prevented the Great War if Serbia's offer to refer the original dispute to it had been accepted. And it had obtained the general acquiescence in rules for making war less barbarous if it should occur. But against Berlin's will to war, and will to wage it without limit or scruple of any kind, it proved absolutely powerless. It could neither protect Europe from war nor war from barbarism. Its regulations and recommendations proved a dead letter. Not only was there no realisation of the more humane conditions which The Hague had sought to establish; there was a positive set-back. The Germans of 1914 proved worse, not better, than the Prussians of 1814; they revived practices many of which had been extinct since the Thirty Years' War, and some which had been extinct since the days of the Assyrian and Babylonian monarchies; and they invented horrors and abominations previously unknown. Plainly The Hague as an international force to prevent and control war had failed.

The failure of the International Socialist or Labour organisation was even more complete. This had no important previous achievements to its credit, such as The Hague had; and its failure to fulfil its province of preventing war was absolute. Nearly all the German Socialists at once ranged themselves at the word of command behind the Emperor and the generals. Many, no doubt, were simply deceived by the Government as to the cause of the war; and their deception is innocence itself compared with that

of the professors and historians who, with infinitely greater means of ascertaining the truth, were even more easily and universally induced to countersign the lies of the German Sovereigns and statesmen. But whatever the degree of guilt there is the fact. When the day of trial came the German International Socialists proved to be nine parts German and at most one International and Socialist. Only a very few of them gave any consideration at all either to the claims of Labour or Socialism, or to the claims of truth, justice or right. The voice of Germany, not merely *Deutschland* but *Deutschtum*, the narrow and arrogant war-cry even more than the loved name of the ancient home, instantly drowned all others. Humiliating as it is not only for all Germans but for all men to remember it, the greatest of all national crimes was committed in a blind unanimity of enthusiasm, with scarcely a voice to protest against it.

Yet these are warnings, not prohibitions. The fact that The Hague Conference proved too weak to prevent the Great War, though it had prevented some smaller ones, should not forbid our entertaining hopes that a stronger international organisation may succeed where The Hague failed; especially if care be taken that in the new world in which it is to work no such danger-spot as Berlin was before 1914 be suffered to remain in existence. The fact that the old International of Labour or Socialism achieved nothing of any value does not forbid us to hope that International Labour legislation, to which

the partners are whole nations, not a mere class or party in each nation, may in the early future carry the world a great step forward on the road of social and industrial progress. International hopes are at present too high to be lightly abandoned. The revolt against the rivalry of nations which was, to a small extent, the cause of the misery of the last four years, is too widespread and intense to allow us to give up without a most determined struggle the effort to substitute, in some degree, co-operation for jealous hostility as the normal relation between the great States of Europe and the world. It seems almost certain that that effort will be made in the form of a League of Nations, and that it will be at least partially and temporarily successful. How much more it will be depends on the success of its friends in defeating the two chief dangers which beset it. The first danger, of course, is that which comes from its open enemies. They exist in all countries; Chauvinists in France, Jingoes in England, filibustering Senators in America; men who prefer force to reason, as the Junkers of Germany did, and who have learnt nothing from the fall of the Junkers. Such men hate the notion of a League of Nations as a thing meant to check the violence and unreason of the natural man in which they in fact delight. And they are reinforced by a whole crowd of men who, without loving violence or hating reason, cannot rise to belief in a League of Nations because they are men of little faith, frost-bound in the acceptance of things as they

are, unable to open their eyes to the possibility of a changed world of better men, women and nations. But probably not even these, and certainly not the men of violence, are so great a danger to the prospects of a strong League as its extreme admirers, who write and speak as if nothing were needed but to draw up and agree to its constitution on paper, giving it extraordinary powers, after which all would be well, and neither arms nor diplomacy would be any longer required in a world of peace.

Talk of this sort, commonest among French Socialists, has had the result of making France the centre of the strongest hostility to the League. And so it will be everywhere. Men of sense are disgusted by such flimsy and superficial sentimentality, ignorant alike of history and of human nature. They know that political history shows that men can only be ruled by one of two things, or more commonly by a mixture of both—custom and force. Of all human actions being done in the world to-day probably ninety-nine hundredths are mainly decided by custom. In a few cases, as in Bolshevist Russia, custom is entirely superseded by naked force. But such episodes never last very long. In any case to suppose that a League of Nations which had neither force nor custom to support it could survive a single crisis of difficulty is to show a total incapacity of political judgment. Confidence is a plant of slow growth in political bosoms. If the League of Nations is to succeed it must win general confidence, and it can only

do that very gradually. It must grow out of the old order, not violently break with it. It must do smaller things successfully in order that greater things may be entrusted to it. It must use what is to prepare what is to be. Happily the madmen who wanted to begin by making it a Super-State have been put back into their strait waistcoats. Happily the world-statesmen showed at once that they had no intention of asking nations which had, some of them, been States for over a thousand years to submit their future destinies to the discretion of something which was not yet born and might not survive the first ailments of childhood. Indeed it is clear that, like other infants, the League will need guardians during its minority. And the minorities of great institutions are often long. Those guardians can only be the United States of America, who have, perhaps, furnished the chief driving power for getting the League accepted; the British Empire, which has provided not only the existing model for its working but nearly all the thought which has turned an idea into a constitutional scheme; and France, who will soon realise that no one has so much to gain by its successful establishment as she. But the guardians, like the other members, will remain separate nations, each with its separate history, habits, moral and material powers. To defy the separate consciousness of the nation-state would be to break the new International feeling against a force too strong for it. For the nation-state has been growing in strength

ever since the break up of the Roman Empire; and the only International which has a chance of surviving is one which works, not against it but through it and with its acceptance, towards the ultimate goal, when each may come to realise that it can have a larger life as a member of an incorporated society than as a separate and isolated unit or individual.

That goal will not be reached for a long while yet. There is still no real sign of any reversal of the process of increased national self-consciousness which has been going on for a thousand years. In the Middle Ages scholars and ecclesiastics, soldiers and statesmen, passed freely from the service of one country to that of another and in doing so neither felt nor excited surprise. During the Renascence such a man as Erasmus was equally at home everywhere, and talked the same language, Latin, wherever he went. He was a scholar and a European, and seems to have had no feeling of nationality at all. That feeling grew in the next two centuries, but was still so weak that one Italian could govern France and another Spain, that the greatest of French soldiers could fight with Spain against his own country, and that an English army * commanded by a Frenchman could fight a

* When this article first appeared several correspondents found this assertion incredible. There is, however, at least one, and perhaps more than one, occasion, on which the situation was as described. At the battle of Almanza in 1707 the first Lord Galway, who was a Frenchman (Marquis de Ruvigny), commanded the English army, while the French army was commanded by the Duke of Berwick, the son of James II. and Arabella Churchill.

French army commanded by an Englishman—all inconceivable defiances of national spirit as it exists to-day.

That spirit must be turned and used. It cannot be met and defeated. There is no reason to suppose that it is greatly weakened by the events of the last four years. It used to be believed that international trade would produce international affection. It ought, of course, to have been obvious that there was no more reason to expect that than that we should all love our grocers and butchers. Anyhow, the promises of Cobden and the Great Exhibition proved a delusion. It would be an insult to compare the companionship of the soldiers of freedom with that of commercial travellers and their customers. But is it certain that even the glorious partnership in heroism and suffering of Belgians and Englishmen, English and French, French and Italians, has always been fruitful of increased affection? Men of different races differ in temper and habits; and close contact, even in the mightiest of causes, is not always found to smooth over or explain away these differences. The Frenchman who had an enthusiastic affection for the English Army from a distance is not always proof against disappointment when close acquaintance brings him up against insularity of mind and roughness of manners. Nor is English sympathy and admiration always tolerant of French meanness in money matters, private and public.

These things are so, and cannot simply be

ignored. But of the three great efforts at international action now before the world two make the absurd attempt to leave national feeling altogether out of account. The Bolshevist movement rapidly shed any ideal quality with which it began, till it is now a mere narrow tyranny based on violence and corruption. But that is not all. It was doomed from the first by its determination to ignore the national feeling which is nowhere stronger than in Russia: by its attempt to appeal to an internationalism which, in fact, does not exist: and by its naked materialism, violence and class selfishness, which were merely the worst side of the Tsardom over again, only with a partial reversal of the *rôles* of tyrant and victim. But if the Tsardom with all history behind it could not stand, it is certain that the new tyranny, with nothing at all behind it and everything distinctively Russian against it, will stand even less. It will, in fact, almost certainly end in a revival of Russian nationality, which, in the reaction from the hated memory of Bolshevism, will be more strongly felt than ever. So, again, International Socialism tries to ignore nations and see only classes. Worse still for its chances, it has become, since Marx, more and more purely materialist. Such a creed has no chance against national feeling, with its centuries of high memories and generous achievements behind it.

> If I should die, think only this of me:
> That there's some corner of a foreign field
> That is for ever England.

Any one who imagines that for " England " here you will ever get men to substitute the Fabian Society or the House of Lords or the Amalgamated Society of Engineers is cherishing the vainest of delusions.

There remains the League of Nations. That is to be a league of something greater than classes; and it is to be a league, not even a society, still less a single unit. It is to take the facts of to-day and build to-morrow out of them. After it as before it, France will still be France and England England; the United States will still be in America, not in Europe. Each will be a free nation, with a history and a temper of its own, with its own variety of classes and conditions, yet itself something more than all and above them all, a body in which its many members find their unity and their life. So each, if it be true to the spirit in which its best representatives are accepting the League, will bring to the service and building of the world of the future a combination of wisdom and strength which no mere class could hope to bring. And the League, as a whole, will be founded on an ideal which is universal not sectional, spiritual not material. If it succeeds it will not have destroyed the old world, it will have given it new birth: birth into a new life, more just, more generous, and more nearly universal.

XIII

OPTIMISM AFTER THE WAR*

HOPE is the second of the great trinity of Christian virtues. And Wordsworth, like St. Paul, puts it second in his similar group of the three virtues by which, as he asserts, we live. Probably he was not thinking of the famous passage in the Epistle to the Corinthians, and indeed only two of his virtues are verbally identical with St. Paul's. But admiration, though a much weaker thing than faith, is after all at the root of it. We cannot have the Pauline sort of faith, which means an emotion which issues in action, except for a person or an idea which first surprises and then wins us, which fills us first with wonder and then with love. And, though we have somehow made admiration a so much weaker word than either, that is just what it really consists of—wonder and love. But this wonder and love, though the foundation of faith, are not by themselves faith. For that hope must be added to them. And so perhaps Wordsworth is more exact in this three than St. Paul, for admiration does not include hope, and therefore in this trinity hope must be expressly added to admiration and love. But love and

* *Times* Literary Supplement, April 29, 1920.

faith make the mention of hope almost unnecessary. For faith implies hope, and is meaningless without it. In either case the importance of hope is plain. Whether implied in faith or superadded to admiration, it is a spring of action, almost as important as or perhaps even more important than love itself. For love, as we so often see, if deprived altogether of hope, has seldom the heart to act, and sinks into the helplessness of mere sympathy.

All this, if true at all, is as true in public life as in private, in politics as in ethics. Those who insisted all through the war, as Wordsworth insisted throughout the struggle with Napoleon, on the duty of hope as the first and paramount duty of all, are to-day sometimes strangely invited by those who were pessimists then and are pessimists now to go back on their creed of hopefulness and admit their mistake. They are asked now at any rate to adopt the temper and the doctrines of those who, having been proved wrong in their expectation of our defeat in war, are revenging themselves by a confident assurance of our failure in peace. It is difficult to see the logic which justifies this invitation. One would rather have supposed that it was for those who proved wrong to learn of those who proved right. No doubt the pessimists can point out that the optimists were often false prophets. And so of course they were. But that is not the important thing. Both were abundantly wrong about details: the optimists who expected that every offensive was

going to end the war, and the pessimists who were certain that everybody was a fool who did not see that Paris was going, or the Channel ports, or the Suez Canal, or our command of the sea. Here there is little to choose. But in the main issue, and it cannot be too often repeated that it was a moral issue as well as an intellectual, the optimists were wholly right and the pessimists wholly wrong. Hope was once more justified of her children. As in 1812 and 1813, so in 1917 and 1918 those who knew they had a duty to do to the very end, and never doubted that in the end they would get it done, proved to have the true moral and political instinct; and both those who a hundred years ago at Holland House thought that "the man was invincible," and those who three years ago at Lansdowne House and elsewhere were sure that we never could defeat the German Army, showed moral weakness as well as political blindness. Indeed, in each case the political blindness was partly due to the moral weakness. Their faith, for lack of hope, had no life in it: their love degenerated into sympathy: their admiration made of wonder and love which they should have felt for their own country was changed into a baser thing made of wonder and fear with which they allowed the armies of the enemy to overwhelm them.

Is there not the same contrast, and largely between the same people, in the temper with which the problems of peace are being faced? Now, as three years ago, the pessimists have

plenty of obvious justification for their pessimism. The picture of Europe is a very different one from what it was then. But from some points of view it is even darker and sadder. The Allies won the war. But, too plainly, they have not yet won the peace. The actual document which is called the Peace Treaty is open to very serious criticism. Scarcely anybody defends the provision in it which penalised the recovery of German industry by exposing Germany to uncertain financial demands only to be limited by her power to meet them. Mr. Keynes, starting from this strong ground, has violently attacked the whole work of those who made the Treaty in a book which exhibits every kind of ability except the political kind, and shows its writer a man of almost all the virtues if we could forget that modesty and a sense of honour have hitherto been counted among them. But the agent who casts himself for the part of principal is a well-established figure in political comedy. Mr. Keynes knows everything except the elements of politics, which is the science of discovering, and the art of accomplishing, the practicable in public affairs. What was the title of the pamphlet Milton issued a few weeks before Charles II. entered London in triumph? Was it not something like "a short and easy way to establish a Free Commonwealth"? Mr. Keynes is not Milton, and 250 years of political experience which Milton could not possess have not taught him the things which in that infancy of English politics Milton could scarcely be expected to

know. He is still in the elementary school of politics, and believes that exhibiting on paper the desirability of a particular course of action is solving the problem of statesmanship. A single year of office in any Cabinet in Europe would have taught him his mistake. Men are not fixed mathematical abstractions. They are very inconstant living things, made up of passions and prejudices and habits, absurd loyalties and unreasonable antipathies; and whether the peace of Europe, or the settlement of Ireland, or, to take the greatest of all, the establishment of a League of Nations be the matter in hand, the real difficulty is, as a rule, not nearly so much the discovery of what is best to be done as of what is the nearest approximation to it which, men and things being what they are, has any chance, first, of getting accepted, and, secondly, of proving workable and lasting.

By that second test the Treaty of Peace has yet to be tried, and it will assuredly prove sufficiently severe. There is no need to try it by unpolitical and fanciful comparisons with what it might have been if the French and the Poles had been suddenly healed, in some night of miracle, of their memories both of a distant past in which they see nothing but their own greatness as self-love shapes it and of a more recent past in which they see only German barbarism and brutality blackened by the hatred of the injured. Wise men, and men who make allowance for the weaknesses of human nature, will have enough to do without that. Their

task is to take things as they are and so to use them as gradually step by step to bring them a little nearer to what they might be. In what spirit are they to approach it? Surely in the same spirit as they faced the war, the spirit of a modest but unconquerable hope.

There is no reason for hope to be ashamed of herself in peace any more than during the war. It is quite true that the optimists of peace have made as many mistakes as the optimists of war. The making of peace has proved a harder and much longer business than they supposed. The return to normal ways, to say nothing of normal prices, has been much slower. The healing of the temporary insanity of Russia has been delayed longer than the optimists expected, and the old family doctor on whom they relied has had to give up the case. It is now seen that the strait-waistcoat which he recommended was not the right treatment. The case is seen to be one in which the patient must be allowed to indulge the cerebral excitement which is his disease, so far as is compatible with the safety of other people, until fatigue of body and mind have led him back to sanity through exhaustion. All these disappointments of the optimist, and others besides, are plain enough. But as in the war, the mistakes of the pessimist have been even more conspicuous. He told us that Bolshevism would spread all over Europe directly the war was over. It has not yet spread outside Russia, and those who know Germany best are most confident that both the virtues

and the vices of Germany will protect her against a system which would only be workable in a country where no one had acquired any habits, no one had any feeling of race, and no one cared anything for his own material interests. He told us that the extremists who had everywhere been so noisy in the guise of pacifists during the war would sweep every country as soon as elections were held. In the last year of the war, and in the year and a half which has elapsed since, elections have been held nearly everywhere; and in all countries, with the possible exception of Italy, their most conspicuous feature has been the rout of the Revolutionary or Bolshevist Left.

As for the relations between Labour and Capital, grave and anxious as the situation undoubtedly still is, whether we look to England, France, or America, it is certainly better, not worse, than the prophets of evil would have had us expect. The wheels of the industrial machine still do a good deal of creaking, and even stop at times; but we are perhaps in danger of allowing the creaking and the stoppages which force themselves so unpleasantly on our attention to make us forget that they occupy only a very small portion of the whole contemporary life of the machine, much the largest part of which passes in smooth and unnoticed obscurity. It is true that some of the methods employed to set the wheels going again after a stoppage seem to call up uncomfortable memories of Ethelred the Unready. Either what is demanded at a

strike is reasonable, in which case it ought to be given without waiting for a strike, or it is unreasonable, in which case it ought not to be given at all, and most particularly not after a strike. But it is easier, as Mr. Keynes does not know, to construct these intellectual dilemmas than to show statesmen a way of never falling into them. We live in a time of excitement, with the sea of our politics and society still restless with the waves of the most tremendous of all storms, waves which must be expected to take longer than any others ever took to subside. And if, as may well be, there is nothing so important as to give them time to perform that natural process of subsiding, it may be that the best way of meeting demands which cannot perhaps be justified either by facts or by arguments (but are not on that account any the less strongly and honestly put forward) is by making concessions which could not get the approval of any strict Court either of politics or of political economy.

Thirty-two years ago Matthew Arnold noted down as one of his daily mottoes for meditation some words of a French optimist: "Rien ne s'arrangera plus dans ce monde que par la raison et l'équité, la patience, le savoir, le dévouement et la modestie." When one reads such words and looks back on what happened in 1914 and the years which followed it, optimism at first seems the veriest vanity of vanities. And yet, so obstinate is optimism, so hardy a growth is hope in men who mean to live, that some

believers in human nature will still reply that the felon stroke of 1914 was the work of one nation or at most of two ; and that history may perhaps ultimately judge that the really significant fact about 1914 is not that war broke out, but that such active, large, generous, sincere, and widespread efforts were made to prevent it. The old wars broke out easily enough, almost as a matter of course. This war perhaps opens the new era by the horror which the very thought of it inspired beforehand everywhere except among the handful of criminals who were bent upon bringing it about ; and by the passionate and all but successful efforts of good men to compel them to listen to that reason and equity and patience in which the French writer sees the new rulers of the world. After all, was not George Sand right, in the slow way of being right which is all that any wise man will expect in politics ? Is it not the simple truth that everywhere to-day many things which fifty years ago would have been decided simply by bare law, by the result of mere remorseless competition, or on the naked system of " might is right," are being settled by conferences and mutual concessions between the parties affected ? Of course the settlements, whether the disputes are between nations or between bodies of workmen and employers, are often greatly influenced by the forces which either party could bring into play if no settlement were effected. But is the hope and plan of a League of Nations and the wide force of reasonableness and good-

will which have gone to its formation to count for nothing? Surely the mere creation even of the forms of such a League proves something, is evidence of a new spirit in the world which did not exist a generation ago. It has difficulties enough before it, and it may fail; but the optimist is surely entitled to point to its mere establishment on paper as proof of a new desire to take a step forward towards substituting the rule of equity for the rule of force.

So in domestic affairs; is it unreasonable of him to claim that the mere setting up of such bodies as Whitley Councils, the mere increase of the practice of employers and employed meeting together and discussing difficulties and differences, is once more proof of a new temper and a new method which at first may seem to produce at least as much friction as the old, but has a new promise in it which the old could not have? The new method, no doubt, leads to unreasonable claims—claims which are sometimes quite incompatible with the continuance of an industry, and may yet have to be met by firmer and harder methods than concession. Or rather it does not lead to them. They were there before; only they were suppressed or inaudible under the old system of "Do what I tell you, take what I offer you, or go." The new way is with all its difficulties at least a move towards the recognition of reason and equity as the ultimate court of appeal in industrial affairs. Yes; and as George Sand adds, also of patience, knowledge, good will, and modesty as their

assessors and *amicæ curiæ*. Where could one find a better list of the qualities which such a court needs? They are not yet any more conspicuous, no doubt, in the average employer or workman than they are in the average man. But the point, on which the optimist may fairly insist, is that the new system does all that a system can do to call them into existence and stimulate their growth. Meeting together is a proof of goodwill, a school of patience and modesty, an almost certain road to increased knowledge on both sides. And perhaps that increased knowledge is the most urgent need of both. The employer has to learn the workman's point of view and his determination no longer to play the part of a mere tool in industry. That is often very new to him. He has got to learn it, think about it, and make up his mind to satisfy it, not by some independent plan of his own but by some plan worked out in conjunction with his men. So he has also to learn the workman's view of the risk of periods of unemployment, and find some way of facing a difficulty of which he has generally thought little, but which is a constant nightmare to many workmen. Again, the men have to learn that the accumulation of capital is at all times, and especially after a great war, a first necessity for the life of the whole people, and certainly not least of those who earn weekly wages. For their two principal needs are regular employment and abundant supplies of all kinds, and every million added to the capital of the country

inevitably tends to increase both. They have also to learn that this accumulation cannot take place—as may be seen in all the savage and backward countries of the world—unless capital be assured of a reasonable return. For men will no more save without the promise of income than they will work without the promise of wages. At least they will only take the chance of no return in case of failure, a chance which happens oftener than workmen realise, if they are also allowed the other chance—of a very high return in case of success. These and a hundred other things, seen now only on one side of the tables of conference, may be fairly expected to be seen by both as patience, good-will, and modesty help and are helped by knowledge, and all gradually more and more place themselves at the service of reason and equity.

So hope insists on fixing her eyes on the sunnier side of a largely overclouded landscape, and believes that in peace as in war her method will prove its own justification by helping to furnish the strength needed to turn her vision into reality. Moreover, Englishmen may be forgiven for thinking that hope can nowhere have a better foundation to build on than the history and character of the English people. Have we not now for seven centuries been always developing the method of free discussion, and always more and more using that, and not force, as the right way of adjusting our differences and disputes? What did our greatest political

thinker put his trust in? Was it not "the inbred integrity, good sense, and good humour of the English people"? May not hope follow modestly in the steps of Burke and believe that these qualities, which have never failed us in the great crises of the past, will no more fail us now? For if the crises and the problems of to-day are partly new, the men who are to solve them are not new, even if, perhaps, they think they are. They are of the old stock, and not to credit them with the old genius for finding a way out of difficulties would be to deny our faith in the English race.

XIV

CONTINUITY IN CHANGE*

At this New Year the whole world seems to have reached a great moment of transition. It seems to have got near the top of the narrow pass which will look over into a new era. Some climb with high hope confident that the unseen country on the other side of the mountains will prove to be a land flowing with milk and honey. Others, accustomed to the sights and sounds of the valley in which they have always lived, and to its familiar way of life, shrink from the crossing over and believe that the mountain barrier which has shut them in has protected them from a barbarous climate and, perhaps, from barbarous men. The latter are probably the more numerous; the former certainly the more active and energetic spirits. Both deceive themselves. It is only by a synthesis of the two temperaments that a right attitude towards the new is to be found. Everywhere, in politics, in literature, in religion, the problem is the same; it is that of finding continuity in progress. That is just what life is: something which is always changing yet never ceasing to be the same, and what Nature does for the individual life is what

* *Times* Literary Supplement, January 6, 1921.

we have to try to do for all forms of the life of society. And, like all moral and social as opposed to mathematical problems, this one does not admit of being answered in any exact formula plainly defining the right course of action in every contingency. No one can promise to say what either the utilitarian ethical imperative or the law of loving our neighbours as ourselves would prescribe as the right course in every particular occasion. Such laws are ideals, things of the spirit, never to be completely expressed in the letter of any rules which can be set down in speech or on paper. Their meaning can only be learnt through its practical application, step by step. Like all spiritual things they can only be experienced from inside. It is impossible to state in a phrase the æsthetic experience produced by a great work of art. It is only by entering into it for himself that a man ever has it at all; only by having it again and again that he can hope to enter into possession of anything like its full greatness.

So also in politics. What does the law of continuity in change mean? No one can say precisely. No one can invent a formula by which any particular proposal can be instantly and infallibly tested, and pronounced to be either in accordance with or contrary to this supreme political law. Yet that is as far as possible from proving the law useless. It at least lays down definitely that two things—two things which some people would think contradictory—are needful for political health. It at

least draws attention to the fact that countries in which constitutional change is avoided with especial care, such as China or Sparta or Venice, seem always to sink into the decay of apathy. On the other hand states which make sudden and frequent changes, like Athens and Florence and the France of the nineteenth century, rapidly exhaust themselves. Insistence on continuity is the first necessity for the life of the state. All the long-lived states have, like Venice, been exceedingly tenacious of established laws and customs. But such states are apt to purchase longevity at the price of activity, beauty, and originality. "Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay" was the saying of one of the poets who have best understood politics and was anything but a revolutionary. And many would argue that two stormy centuries of Florence much more than out-value for humanity all the thousand ordered years of the Venetian Republic, and that the century or century and a half of Athens which carries us from Æschylus to Demosthenes is worth a hundred whole histories of Sparta, in which there is little besides Leonidas (with the help, too, of one of the noblest of the poets whom Athens inspired and sheltered) who can very greatly move us. Yet, perhaps, it is chiefly the business of the other arts to adorn the life of the state but of the political art to preserve it. And while the ultra-conservative states of China and Venice, the moderately conservative Rome and England have lived to a very great age,

Athens and Florence had brief and troubled lives. Athens and Florence, and, one may add, the Paris of the last century were all more than once entered by a foreign conqueror. Peking, Sparta, Rome, Venice, and London all passed through many centuries without seeing an invader. Stability is probably the most important of all elements of political strength. The political restlessness of Athens and Florence and Paris was in each case followed by, and was probably the cause of, the loss at once of freedom at home and power abroad. The French Revolution led at once, and inevitably, to Napoleon, as Burke had foreseen; and his restless military genius combined with the revolutionary restlessness of the French people to exhaust France to such an extent that she has never since 1815 been the power in Europe which she was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. We can all now see, though it was not always plain at the time, that since Waterloo she has never possessed the resources which enabled her under Louis XIV. to play a decisive part in the most disastrous war ever waged by England, and under Napoleon to overrun all Europe; and though many who should have known better feared her under Napoleon III., all such fears received their final answer at Sedan. During the fifty-five years which separated Waterloo from Sedan she had recovered strength certainly, but never enough to place her in the same position relatively to the rest of the world as she occupied ten, twenty,

and two hundred years before Waterloo. Her rivals had grown more rapidly than she; the wealth and population of England, the military power of Germany, the new unity of Italy, had made such dreams as those of Louis XIV. and Napoleon no longer merely impracticable but absurd. Such a price has France permanently paid for twenty-five years of feverish change and exaltation, the madness of freedom and the madness of slavery. Not till, perhaps, the last twenty years has any Government of hers been able to feel assured of ten years' continuance. At last the Third Republic, having escaped the Boulanger and Dreyfus dangers, was able to face with a united front the supreme ordeal of the war and to emerge from it, bleeding indeed profusely, but triumphant; and when five more years have passed it will be possible to say that for more than half the period since Waterloo the political system of France has remained unchanged, and that the spirit of continuity has begun to reassert itself against the eternal round of change.

But with all the world of to-day in an orgy of change how shall that spirit find strength to do its work in France or elsewhere? The war has left us face to face not only with political and national changes on the widest scale but with something much more difficult to deal with—a whole atmosphere of dissatisfaction with the old and aspiration after the new: all that is vaguely called political, social and economic unrest. The Peace Treaty of 1919

has recast the map of Europe. This has been done, broadly speaking, on the basis of the principle of nationality, and of the choice of the people concerned in the changes. The Treaty is the first in the history of Europe which has been founded on a higher ideal than that of "possession is nine-tenths of the law" and "J'y suis j'y reste," or even that of legal inheritance and the family property of Royal personages, one or other of which was the inspiration of most or all of the old treaties. And that, of course, is just what produces the present political difficulty. Ideals are always destructive things; part of their business is the destruction of something which needs to be replaced by something else. The Gospel, in St. Paul's view, did destroy the Law; and even He who declared that He came not to destroy it but to fulfil it gave the other side of that saying, as He did with so many of His sayings, when He poured forth those striking contrasts between what was "said by them of old time" and what "I say unto you." And the destructiveness of ideals is all the greater, perhaps, because of their necessary and essential indefinableness. Nobody can say exactly what Mr. Wilson's famous Fourteen Points command or forbid. Some people assert that the Treaty of Versailles is in flagrant contradiction with them; others, including Mr. Wilson, declare that it is founded upon them. This dispute is far from proving that they or the other idealisms which became so prominent in the last year of the war were

empty and useless. Far from it. No sane criticism of the Treaty can deny that those idealisms wrote their mark all over it, even though they did not obliterate all others.

And now the problem is how to preserve the idealist gains achieved on paper and partly realized. Austria and Turkey are gone—the old Austria and the old Turkey, at any rate. Even Germany has lost much of her old self. In their place is a motley of new States—a new Serbia or Jugo-Slavia, a new Poland, a new Bohemia, a new Greece, a new Esthonia, an enlarged France and Italy and Denmark. The changes are plainly on a scale which has never been attempted before. They exhibit the far-reaching, what some would call the dangerous, action of general principles in political matters. Those who have brought them about have evidently carried to the extreme edge of safety, if not beyond it, the intrusion of abstract doctrines and their logical application into politics. How can so enormous a dose of change be assimilated by the digestion of Europe? Obviously only by a very careful diet after swallowing it. There can be no chance of the present arrangements proving permanent unless the new States are extremely abstemious in the matter of ambitions and novelties for a long time to come. Action and reaction are always at work in human nature, and not least in politics. The thing is to expect reaction, make it your own, and guide it. If you do not, it overwhelms you. Poland, Jugo-Slavia, and even Italy itself, have in the last six years

had enough nationalist advance and excitement about external politics to last them at least for a generation. Their own peoples will inevitably feel a satiety of it, while their neighbours are thoroughly tired of being worried and disturbed. Their hope lies in quietness, in consolidation of their gains, and, most important of all, in making the changes which have occurred as little obvious, ostentatious and troublesome as possible. They have to remember that one of the strangest but most certain facts of human nature is that people more easily bear great evils to which they are accustomed than smaller evils which are new. Men who have escaped from the despotism of a tyrant are more actively critical of small failings in the new, benevolent government than they were of the horrors to which they had been born. All these new States should therefore incorporate all that is in any way tolerable of the ways and habits of the old. There is no sure way of averting the danger of the mood which leads to reactions and counter revolutions but by going to meet it with a policy of continuity. The success of the old France in Alsace was due to her altering as little as possible in the laws and habits of the country she incorporated. There are few appetites for change so hungry that a transfer of allegiance does not satisfy them. The other changes should be as few and as unobtrusive as possible. So continuity will avert the reaction which might otherwise undo the blessings of change.

The same law is at work in the still more

difficult field of economics and industry. The democratic principles put forward by the Allies in the war have combined with the Revolution of Russia to excite the wage-earning classes to a mood of great but vague expectations all over the world. They had, even before the war, become utterly impatient of the industrial system which beginning in England had in a hundred years spread all over Europe. They attributed its evils to what they called Capitalism, which they imagined to be a new and mischievous thing, whereas it is an old and beneficent thing without which production can never be carried beyond the stage of infancy. This belief, with others equally crude, led to the second Russian Revolution, which in the attempt to destroy Capitalism has almost totally destroyed Russia. No country in the history of the world has ever gone back so fast as Russia has during the last few years. It will take many years, and they must be years of capitalism, before she can again approach the stage of prosperity which she had reached before the war. This does not mean that we must acquiesce in the admitted evils of the old industrial system. We shall not acquiesce in them; we are not doing so. The interests of Labour find a place in the Peace Treaty which they never found in any before it. It recognises the claim of workmen to have some voice in deciding the conditions of their labour and its remuneration. Already in England wages and conditions have greatly improved, perhaps beyond what it will be possible to maintain unless

labour becomes more productive. These matters are now almost always settled, not by naked competition, but by agreement between representatives of employers and employed. This would by itself be a great advance. But a far greater is the recognition, in the systems proposed for the future management of the mines and railways, of the claim of the workmen to some share in the control of the business in which they are employed.* All these things are, as they should be, tentative and experimental. We are on the whole following the traditional English method of feeling our way. The English working man of advanced views has paid some lip worship to the Russian break with all the industrial past, but he is too practical, as a rule, to desire its application here. He knows that it is one thing—and a thing, as the proof shows, ruinous enough—to introduce it into a country whose manufactures occupied a tiny fraction of its population, and quite another, a thousand times more fatal, to do so in one the bulk of whose population is manufacturing and

* These proposals appear at present (July, 1921) to have been abandoned or found impracticable. But it is likely enough that further efforts may be made before very long to work out more satisfactory schemes with the same object. Meanwhile the scheme of something like Profit Sharing arranged between coalowners and miners has received a striking tribute from the miners' leader, Mr. Hodges, who described it as "the most far-reaching proposal that has been made in modern industry." It certainly carries that most hopeful of all solutions of industrial disputes and distrust far further than it has ever been carried before.

industrial. He feels, therefore, and as the headiness induced by the war diminishes will more and more feel, that the right thing is to repair, alter and adapt an old industrial house, not to pull it down because it was in some parts inconvenient or unhealthy. He clearly feels that change is necessary, and means to insist upon it; but he also feels, dimly perhaps, but with a kind of conviction that he could not express and is hardly aware of, that something which is continuity (though he would not use that word) is necessary too. He will gradually find his way to a new and better order of industry in which he will no longer be a mere "hand," but a co-operating and understanding partner under one system or another, the best of which will not be discovered, and certainly not perfected, for a long time to come.

Part of the continuity will certainly be capital, both his own and other people's. Here, too, change will no doubt occur. The capitalist of the future will in some ways be in a different position from the capitalist of the past. But capital and the reward of capital there will certainly be: for without it industrial progress is absolutely impossible. In a primitive prairie where two men are bringing patches into cultivation and one eats and drinks all the product of his crops, while the other saves part of it, sells it, and buys the means by which he himself or another man can bring another patch into cultivation, it is solely by the last that production is increased, and solely because he uses part of

his product as capital on which he necessarily expects a return. So he grows rich while the other remains poor. Their relative positions are important only to themselves. What is important from the public point of view is that the man who grows rich has benefited his country, and could not help doing so if he were a devil of malice, while the man who remains poor is for whatever reason the man of the parable who keeps his talent in a napkin and is an unprofitable servant to his country. All capital has its origin in saving, which is postponing a small, present and certain enjoyment to a larger, future but problematic one. The more the workman is admitted into the councils of business the more he will see this. No new railway can be built, no new manufacture begun, without capital which some one must have saved and must be prepared to risk. And as new enterprises often fail, the more risky they are the larger must be the possible profit in the event of success. The workman is apt to fancy that all capital secures a high return. A slight acquaintance with the history of limited companies or with Stock Exchange quotations would at once correct this delusion. Perhaps it is most easily corrected by the history of two companies, of one or other of which he is almost sure to have heard. The District Railway Company of London has paid wages to labour and given a service of trains to the public for over half a century; and the Manchester Ship Canal has done the same for a shorter period. But since 1882 the Railway

has not paid a penny of interest, nor did the Canal begin to do so till five years ago, to those who found the capital which made possible the paying of those wages and the rendering of those services. They need not be pitied. They took their risk and lost. But neither would they have deserved to incur obloquy if they had won instead and secured a return of twenty, thirty, or forty per cent. It is to be remembered that if an enterprise does badly it may still provide enough, as these have done, for the workmen's wages; indeed, of course, it would at once cease altogether if it did not. But if that stage of failure is reached and the workmen lose their employment, they may, and generally do, find other employment, however seriously they suffer, and they often do suffer very seriously, in the meanwhile. The capitalist, on the other hand, has lost his capital altogether; it has simply ceased to exist; it is not there any longer to be transferred to a new enterprise. All this is elementary enough; but to-day it has ceased to be superfluous to point out that without continually accumulated capital there can be no increase in public production, and that without a prospect of a fair return there will be no accumulation of capital. So much continuity there must be. But it is compatible with many changes, the best of which would be for the workmen themselves to become more and more the providers of capital for their own trades.

History warns us of another financial rock on which democracy must not run if it is to be

saved. That is the rock of over-taxation. Over-taxation of the poor played a large part in bringing about the French Revolution; over-taxation of everybody, and especially the rich, was one of the most certain causes of the fall of the Roman Empire. The barbarism and poverty of Asia are due to the fact that from time immemorial, and especially since the conquest of the Turks in Western Asia, any one who was visibly rich was instantly despoiled by the agents of the Government. The consequence is that the temptation to save, on the results of which all economic development depends, has been much weaker in Asia than in Europe; capital has not been accumulated because of the probability of its being confiscated; and consequently the trading and manufacturing operations by which not merely the traders but their whole countries are enriched have, for lack of security, not come into existence. The present comparative prosperity of India is due to the fact that under the British rule a man has known that if he made a fortune it would remain his, which is just what he did not know under the old rulers of India. Some theorists of the West imagine that the plan of seizing through the tax-gatherer half or three-quarters of the wealth of the rich is a new and brilliant discovery of their own. It is, on the contrary, the oldest of all systems of taxation; and its results are written in the history of all parts of Asia, where commonly not even the tax-gatherer has been able to find any wealth to seize. The making of wealth is usually a business involving labour and

self-denial; and men will not incur either until they are fairly secure of the reward. The consequence is that countries in which the reward is denied remain in a condition of general poverty and backwardness. There is no escape from this, and if Western democracies imitate the policy of Oriental rajahs they will produce the same result and pay the same penalty.

So much for continuity in economics, and fiscal policy. Yet there is even here another side. The modern democracy, though exactly as subject to economic law as the rajah, is not in other respects exactly like him. It does not spend the proceeds of the taxes mainly on silks or wines or jewels or women. In theory and aim, at any rate, it spends them on promoting the public good. Health and education, the judicial administration, police, roads, and other such matters are among its heaviest expenses. Almost the heaviest of all in England is, in its various forms, the relief of the poor, than which none is capable of being more beneficial, and none of being more pernicious, to the life of the State. What we see in all this is the universally accepted policy of the democracies, which is that of applying the public funds, at any rate after the protection of the State from external dangers and sometimes to the neglect of that primary duty, to the enlargement and betterment of the life of the whole people. There is the element of change, which is good and indeed final. The Magistrates in Quarter Sessions governed the English counties far more economically than the present County and District Councils, with even

less suspicion of jobbery, and, within their limits, quite as efficiently. But that is just the point. Their limits were too narrow. Nobody dreams of desiring to return to them. Long before the war the nation had begun to demand a larger conception of their functions from all its officials, municipal as well as national. The demand has grown since the war. It means that the action of the State, which used to be mainly negative, almost an affair of regulation and police, should in many spheres become positive, an affair of instruction, inspiration and example. Every one now desires this. But every one with a sense of realities knows that it must be done with caution. Bureaucracies, which consist of men with fixed salaries spending other people's money, are almost invariably wasteful and unprogressive. They tend to become a ceremonial priesthood, doing the things which they have always been accustomed to do, and identifying the interest of their own order with the good of the State.

Will the new democracies—and the oldest to-day have a new spirit—be able to keep enough of the old world to save the new? Will they be able to unite their policy of ideas and sympathy, alike in foreign and home affairs, with enough caution, with enough sense of the facts which limit and condition human progress, with enough instinct for that continuity without which progress is a thing in the air having no foundations—in a word, with enough history, to give its philosophy a chance of being engrafted into the political tree of life? That is the

problem, of such absorbing interest, of such immeasurable gravity, of which the next generation will give the solution. Landor in one of his Conversations makes Machiavelli say that "democracies have enemies in most of the rich, in more of the timorous, and nearly in all the wise." This always has been true, and still is: must it always remain so? Monarchies and aristocracies have commonly died of the worship of an inequality false to nature; and of forgetting that change is of the essence of life. Democracies have died, even more surely and much more quickly, of the opposite things, of the worship of an equality as false as the inequality of the others, and of forgetting that the present is rooted in the past and dies if it be plucked away from its roots. The only democracy which has ever continued to flourish on a great and ever greater scale for nearly a century and a half has all throughout its life allowed its caprices to be controlled, indeed to be repressed, by an almost unchangeable Constitution, which it owes, first, to the peculiar circumstances of its birth, secondly to the rare wisdom and patriotism of its founders, and thirdly to their happy misreading of the English political system which they desired to imitate. Such a combination of felicities will not easily occur again. If the democracies of Europe are to be saved and to build the new world, they must work out their salvation as much by their political justice, temperance and teachableness as by their tenderness to the weak, their faith in humanity, and their hopefor a better and more generous order.

INDEX

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